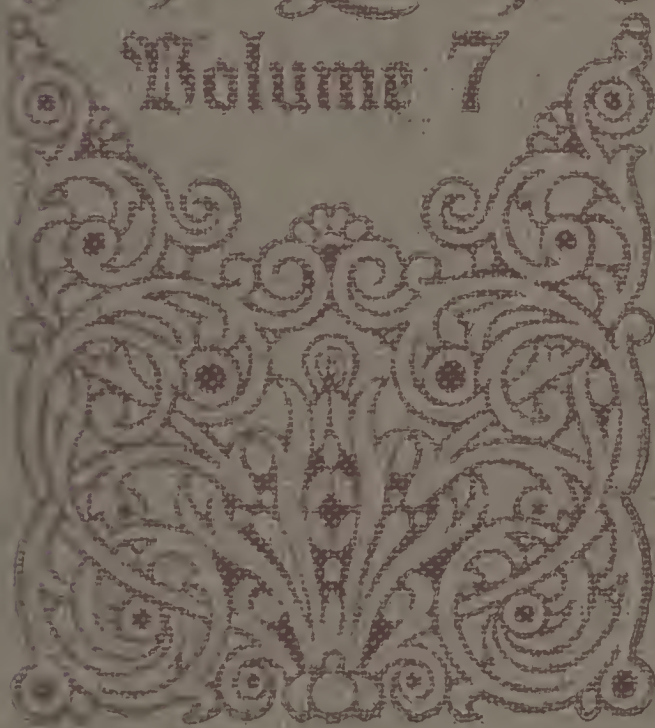
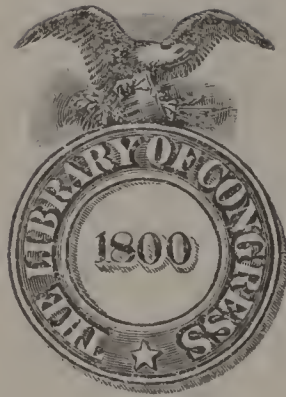


The Best Stories
by the Authors
of the *Knights*

Vol. 7





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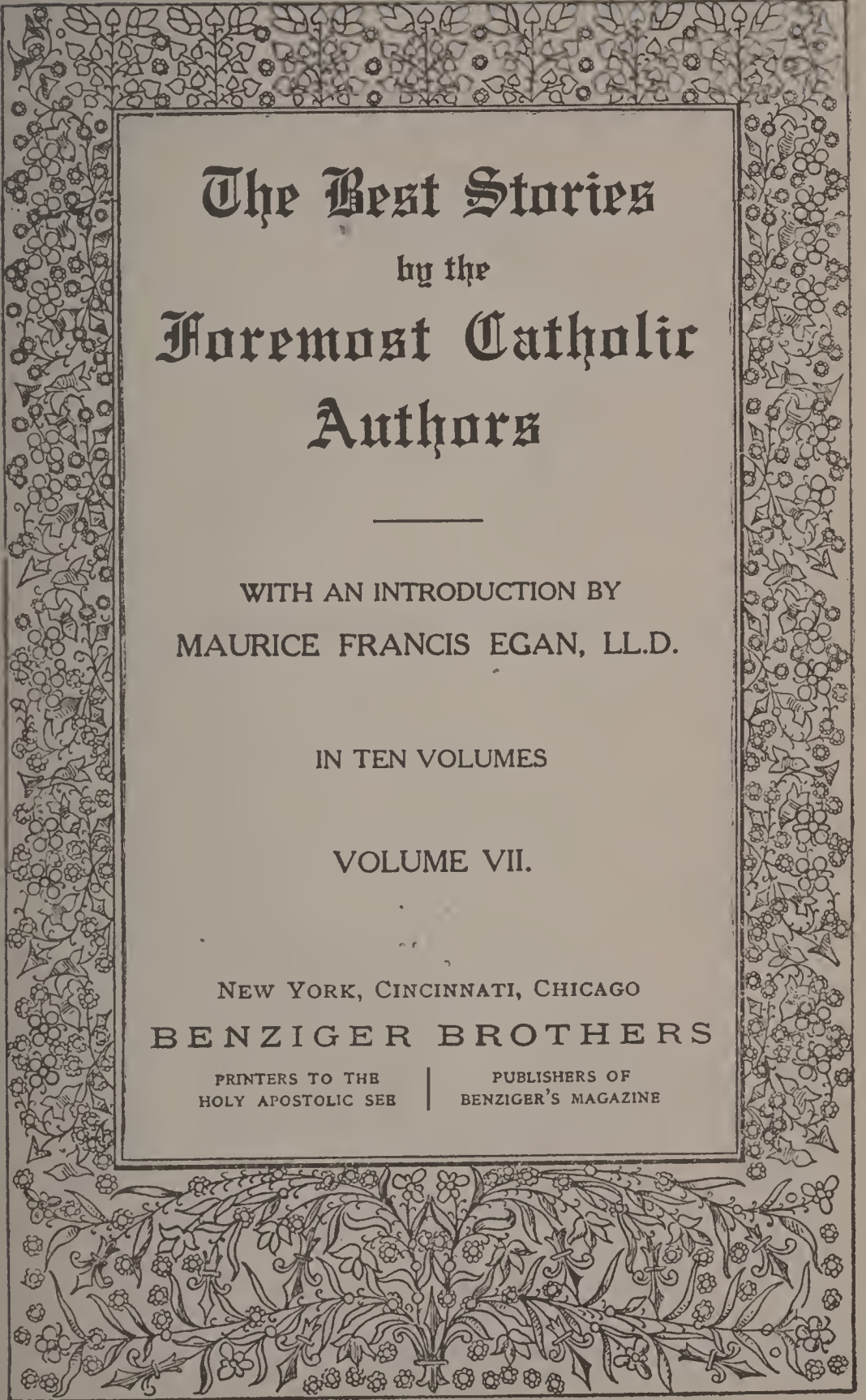
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The Best Stories

by the

Foremost Catholic Authors

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN, LL.D.

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOLUME VII.

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From Darkness to Light

BY MRS. FRANCIS CHADWICK

THE scattered population of Glencora wondered not a little in their slow way at the coming of the lady and her daughter to the lonely, long-closed house on the hill. For many years it had been considered uninhabitable, and was believed by the more credulous to be haunted, and at the same time, by reason of its isolation and generally bleak and moorlike surroundings, a "cur'us, skeery sort of place for tony folk" like these, so very different from the rough farmers who owned the house in former days.

Stettson's (it still kept the name from its builder, long since quiet in the prim church in the valley)—Stettson's wasn't, so to say, too lucky. There had been more than the usual number of deaths within its walls, and the family, at first prosperous enough, seemed somehow to disperse in ways mysterious and melancholy.

"One of the girls up there sort of disappeared, granny used to say," said Phoebe Reed, the

buxom village chronicle, stopping as was her wont for a chat with her neighbors, and energetically swinging her milk-pails from time to time, as if for her departure to the pleasant meadow where the cows were awaiting her.

“It’s true, so she did,” said Jake Manders, Phœbe’s masculine rival in the way of gossip, “and Bill Stettson, the oldest son and a wild one he was, runned away to sea and was lost in fur-rin parts. And the old man himself, well, he had his failings like another, and was most times hanging ’bout Raynor’s, evenings, till Raynor, he pushed him out when the place shut up, and that was the way the pore old chap come to his end. His little daughter Araminty (she’s dead too, years), well, she was going to church one Sunday, and she nigh fell over him where he was a-lying in that lane up there.”

“And was he dead?” asked a child listener, in open-mouthed horror.

“Yes, sir,” said Jake emphatically, forgetful of the sex of the small inquirer.

“Poor Mrs. Stettson!” Phœbe resumed. “She just lingered on, granny often told us. She used to sit with her, evenings, jest to keep her sperrits up; talking over all the people used to

be about, and all that had come and gone, and the sight of folks lying cold in the churchyard, till pore Sally Stettson'd get that lonely and frightened she'd catch hold of granny's hand when she'd see her start to go, and she'd beg on her to stay on a bit.

"For she'd say, 'The nights closin' in, is what I can't abear,' and she'd be that low-sperrited, she'd make gran'ny help her light the lamps, and make things cheery-like, for she couldn't help lookin' into the corners after dark. So she died after a bit, sad and forlorn enough, in the night all alone; and a boy lived the nearest, he looked in and seen her sittin' there in her chair—well, it's no use talking, for, as ma says, 'Life's sad enough, without any of us taking other people's cares to ourselves.'"

"Thet's why you'd wonder at those kind of stylish ladies comin' here queer like, leavin' their friends. Guess they've got some reason they can't tell to folks," said Jake, shaking his head sagely.

"Oh, well, you don't never know; but they're mighty stand-off, thet's sure, though Rachel Hutton, she was saying thet the day of the big storm she was over at Norton's to see the bride;

and being fine when she started, she had on her lavender-colored bonnet—yes, her new town bonnet. When the rain came on, and she on the road, and no shelter, her feeling was somethin' awful, when all of a suddint, the door of thet house opens, and out comes thet gell with a umbrella, and down she runs to the gate to pore Rachel. She had taken off her bonnet, and had it covered up with her skirt, which was only her brown, and it in its fifth year, so she didn't feel quite so bad about thet.

"So 'Come up to the house,' says the gell, 'you mustn't go on in such a storm,' says she; and thet was civil enough and jest what any ornery person would do."

"And what was she talkin' about?"

"Oh, 'bout the weather, and the crops, and a lot 'bout flowers, and what sort grew best 'round here; so Rachel, she felt kind a intimate, and neighborly, an' sez she, 'Jest you come down to my house, and I'll show you flowers it'll be hard to beat'; but the young lady, she got kind a quiet and sez she, sort of prim, that her mother was ill, and in trouble, and wanted to be perfectly quiet, and thet if the neighbors wanted to be kind, they'd jest leave them to themselves."

"Thet wasn't what you'd call perlite," said Jake, scratching his head.

"Well, Rachel says it was perlite enough the kind o' sad way she said it, so she didn't feel mad.

"'Hev you lost any relative lately?' says she, feeling a interest in the gell.

"'Not exactly,' says the gell, and Rachel Hutton, she says the tears stood in her eyes. 'Not by death,' says she, speaking kind a low. So Rachel, that's got a high sperrit of her own, she thanked the gell, and come away the moment the sun shone a bit, seeing as visitors wasn't wanted up there."

"Ben Simpson, he does their chores," put in Jake, thinking Phœbe a terrible talker; "he says the gell spends her time gardenin' mostly, and Ben, he says, she's goin' to sell her flowers in town if they come up well. She's got a splendid plenty slips from Harris's greenhouse in Hampton; and a-startin' cranberries in Eben's lot, what they leased from him."

As the gossips chatted, each with an uneasy sense of work to be done, glad of any subject out of the dull beaten way, a man on horseback came up the hill, evidently taking the bearings of the place; gazing about inquiringly till, his eyes falling on

the distant, prison-like house on the hill, he rode along at a good pace till he reached the gate, where he dismounted, oblivious of the curious, watching group on the road below, and made his way quietly—it would almost seem stealthily—up the rough, stony road leading to the house, where he knocked softly at the door.

“It’s the gell opened it,” said Phoebe in a hushed, impressive voice, as if the others were blind, and she their only possible informant. “Yes, she’s dressed in white, or something light, maybe spotted cotton which certainly does show white at a distance. I think he’s a travelin’ agent—mebbe fancy soap; mebbe he’s her beau.”

“She ain’t receivin’ him very kind,” said Jake, grinning. “He ain’t goin’ to get past that door, I’ll bet.”

How much astonished would have been the simple watchers had they heard the curious conversation at the door.

“After all I said to you, Gerald!” the girl said, speaking almost in a whisper. “It is too bad. You pretend to care for me, and yet you disregard my most earnest wish. Don’t you know that my desire in coming here was to break completely with the past?”

"Cruel as usual, Agatha," the visitor said, standing on the gravel unwelcomed.

"Cruel!" she said bitterly. "What have you to suffer compared to us?"

"Absence from you seems to me worse than anything else could possibly be; and the sense, Agatha, that you and your mother are here alone in this wild place, away from all your friends, who might at least be allowed to share your trouble even a little."

"No one can share it, no one can lighten it," the girl said, clasping her hands; "we must live on, we must bear it; and this quiet life, away from every reminder of the past, is the nearest approach to peace we shall ever know."

"Your husband would have a right to share it, to at least protect you both from a thousand things."

"I shall never have a husband," she said; "nothing, nothing in this world shall ever alter my decision. There is only one thing you can do, and that is to leave us to ourselves. No one will harm us; they are quite friendly people about, whose assistance we can count on at any time, and they—recall no unhappy memories."

"Do you really mean this, Agatha?"

“Sincerely.”

“That I may never see you again!”

The girl’s dark eyes looked out from a face set like stone:

“Never again, Gerald! This shadow hangs over us and will hang over us forever. Until you can tell me that it has lifted we must never meet. Now go, please go. Dear mother has been sleeping and may wake at any moment. If you knew how the smallest memories harrow her, you would spare her your presence. If I seem harsh, do not blame me, Gerald; mother and I will and must walk this world alone.”

The young man turned away in silence, and Phœbe Reed, who had been milking, ran down the road to rejoin her companions and walk home with them.

“Guess he must be soap after all,” she said breathlessly, catching up with such of the group as remained together. “And she [with a chuckle] is up to their ways, and never let him in; for once those commercial gents is through your door, Lord help you! Why, once I was a-making walnut cake, chopping meat, and minding Sue at the same time, ma bein’ down to mill. So one of them gents he come to the door—a spruce one he was, too.

‘No,’ says I, sort of planting myself across the doorway, ‘I’ve got all I want’ (without askin’ what he had, fear he’d get started.)

“ ‘Wait till you see,’ says he, ‘and I’ll bet your parlor’s going to have one ’s sure as fate. Lady down at the green house (pointing to Mirandy’s) she’s goin’ to have one next trip. S’pose (kind of thoughtful)—s’pose she’ll be the first to have one in these parts, and up in town,’ he says, ‘a lady’d consider herself disgraced——’

“ ‘What are they, anyhow?’ says I, kind of simple.

“ ‘Oh, it don’t matter,’ says he, purtendin’ to go away; and we went on see-sawin’, he purtendin’ he didn’t want to show the old things, and I not wantin’ to look too cur’us.

“Well, he slipped past me while we was a-talkin’, and set down on the chair near the door, and I dunno how long he’d stopped, when I heard Sue a-hollerin’ like mad, and there she was, fell out of her high chair (the straps comin’ undone) and a bump like a pertato on her head, and Tom, the yellar cat, in the choppin’ bowl, finishin’ the meat; and as for the walnut cake! It nearly blinded me openin’ the oven door—the smoke that poured out, and the cake in cinders!

"I guess I gave that chap my mind, for he went off like a race-horse."

"What was he sellin', Phœbe?" asked the young, round-eyed child, the champion listener.

Phœbe roared out laughing. "Thet's the joke," she said. "I never heard. Mirandy says he never went there, she being out and the house closed; but I know what I got—a box on each ear, thet stung for an hour, when ma got home."

* * * * *

In her quiet life in the lonely house Agatha seemed to find peace for her mother and herself; and next to her belief in God, and prayers, that at times seemed useless, she found in constant work—that blessed solace granted to mankind after the Fall—her greatest comfort; her monotonous round of duties filled up her otherwise empty, despairing days. Profitable work it was, too, for by the sale of her flowers her mother was provided with many little comforts indispensable to her delicate health and otherwise impossible to procure.

Once a month Agatha left her mother unwillingly, and was absent till evening, coming back red-eyed and sorrowful; these mysterious visits leaving them both wretched and almost despairing for days after. Alas! What might have been hap-

piness, woods and river and smiling farm-lands, clustering roses and sweet-scented, old-fashioned flowers—such surroundings as they had both pined for often in their city life—were as naught to them now, for the cloud hung heavy over them. And thus a year passed.

There was a broad, white harvest moon radiant overhead, and the harvesters in the fields working with a will, that they might ride homeward on the finished loads, and then to the harvest dance and supper. Looking down upon the joyous scene below sat the mother and daughter at the window, until the moon waned, and the mother went to lie down, leaving Agatha alone. Phœbe, talking as usual in the intervals of work, suddenly lifted a warning finger.

“Now who on earth is that at this time of night?”

Hushed into silence the workers listened to the sound of a galloping horse. Then the rider of a year ago came hurrying up the road, dismounting at the gate, as on his first visit, and going softly up to the house.

“The very same feller as came a year ago! ’Member, Jake?” Jake nodded.

Agatha opened the door with caution, trembling and white.

"I will come outside," she said. "You must not wake mother; she is resting. Why have you come again? Are all men false to their promises?"

"I have not broken mine, Agatha."

"You have not?" said she, scornfully turning away. "Your memory of our last meeting must be sadly at fault."

The man beside her smiled pityingly.

"My memory of our last meeting is very clear and distinct. You told me never to come here again, until——"

"Oh, Gerald, Gerald! What is it?"

"Just that Paul is innocent, dearest girl; he is here, behind those trees, waiting until you prepare the dear little mother to see him."

She had vanished—almost before he had finished—and was beside her mother in the inner room, breathless, but calming herself to tell the glorious news. She sat down on the bed, taking the little thin hand lying on the coverlet.

"Awake, mother?" she asked. "We have had a visitor since you slept."

"A visitor? Eben from the village?"

"No, no!" tremulously. "Some one we used to know—very well."

"Agatha, dear, I know. It is poor Gerald, in

spite of all your bad treatment. Where is he? I should dearly love to see him. Won't he come in?"

"Oh, yes; indeed, indeed he will," said Agatha, the big tears beginning to course down her cheeks. "But he has brought us good news."

"They will grant the new trial after all. Thank God!"

"Blessed little mother! Better than that. Listen, and keep calm, for all our sakes. Paul is innocent. No, no; you mustn't faint, dearest; he would be so disappointed! He is coming up the road; come, come, that is his step. No one but you must welcome him at the door." A moment later a tall dark form ran up the garden path, and straight into the waiting arms.

"Let us leave them to themselves," whispered Gerald, leading Agatha out into the moonlight. "I suppose I may stay now?"

Agatha smiled, and held out her hand, which he clasped tenderly.

"Is it to keep?" he asked, his voice trembling.

And Agatha certainly did not say "no," as there was a wedding a few days after, at the old house, to which the young people of the village were invited. For, as Agatha said, "We have been so horribly inhospitable to all these kind people, it

is time that we should welcome them inside our doors for once—into this quaint old house which has been a shelter to us in our trouble, and has seen that trouble turned into joy.”

“They’ve bought the house,” explained Phœbe after her usual manner, as she and her companions watched the little party drive away to town, “and are coming back here a part of every summer; for she’s took a fancy to it, and, of course, anything she likes, *he* likes. I guess the charm’s broke thet was over the place anyway.”

At the End o' Life

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN

HE was dying!

He did not need the physician, mournfully shaking his head, nor the solemn words of the young priest who had been his assistant during the past months of weakness, to tell him that. He had felt it from the first moment, when the sharp pain shot through his breast as he stood at the altar and recited the *Pater Noster*, and he had begun to hasten the words, lest he should be too late to administer to himself his own Viaticum. Even before that there seemed to be a sort of premonition. He had made his confession ere beginning the Mass, though it was but three days since his last. Now it was all over; the Extreme Unction had been given, the last words of the Litany of the Dying had been finished in the choking voice of the assistant.

He was dying. All these solemn rites were being performed for *him*! How many times he

had said and done these things for others ! Though he knew so well that the end was near, he found it hard to adjust his attitude to the sudden approach of the dark angel. He kept repeating to himself the word, "*dying!*" as though to force the idea upon his consciousness. Gradually his mental efforts began to have their effect. He could grasp the idea that dissolution was near. All the facts that group around the thought of death in the Christian mind took their place before his imagination. He felt, at last, that he was about to meet his eternal Judge; that the sentence would be passed upon him before the little clock on the wall should strike the next hour.

This thought was unaccompanied by any terror. He had striven to live his life well. No recollection of a mortal sin crossed his mind to harass his dying moments. The last in the world to imagine himself a saint, he could not, on the other hand, discover in his past a cause for fear. But the feeling which did accompany the more and more complete realization of his condition was one of intense, bitter disappointment.

He had entered the seminary after some years of living in the world, and at that time of life when a man most appreciates the thoughts of home, of

wife and family. Toward the end of his course, the desire for these things had become so keen that he had even doubted his vocation, and, to settle the doubt, had made a retreat of unusual length. During this retreat, the Method of Right Choice, as given by St. Ignatius, had made a deep impression upon him. That particular point in the suggestions which had led him to keep on with his course was the direction to fancy himself at the hour of his death, to view his life as past, and to decide by what he would then wish to have done. So he had taken his minor orders. When he came to the sub-diaconate and the solemn vows implied in accepting the greater order, though he trembled, he stood up bravely, backed by the thought: "I shall be glad to have done this when I come to die." When he went out on the mission, and felt often the sting of loneliness as he returned to his empty rooms after seeing the domestic life of others, he would reflect on the peace it would bring when death was at the door. As the years went by, with their round of discouragements, unappreciated efforts, weary hours in dark confessionals, sick-calls, when he himself needed a physician, difficulties with household help, the sense of loneliness had grown stronger, and he had drawn

closer to the thought of the joy he would feel in the death-hour at having endured it all.

The hour of death! It had grown to be his daily meditation, the momentary stimulant to renewed effort and endurance. "Ah," he had said, "then I shall be glad, glad I have gone without the home-life, glad I have been weary and heartsore, glad I have been poor, glad, as I meet Him who was alone on earth, that I, too, have been alone."

And now that the time had come none of this joy seemed to be his. He tried to stir it up within his breast; it would not come. He reviewed the life that was now finished. It appeared to him only as something of which he was intensely weary. *Commonplace* seemed written over every page of the history. Where others had gone to spheres of great influence, he had remained in his little country parish. Where some had accomplished startling achievements, he had only his church in good condition to show for his labors. Where many had been decorated with high titles and entrusted with important missions, he had remained with no claim upon a more distinctive appellation than "Father," and the cure of this handful of souls was the crowning commission after thirty years

of service. As he looked back he found it sadly hard to discover what good he had done, or that his life had been of real value. Any one else might have done it all.

But the bitterest drop in his cup of disappointment was the fact that the loneliness which had always been his greatest cross seemed harder than ever at this time when he had expected to begin to taste the reward of his sacrifice in having given up the delights of home for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He could not help recalling to mind the deaths he had attended, where, beside the consolations of religion, there had been the loving care of true helpmates, and sons and daughters had stood by to comfort the dying moments of the departing soul. He could not but contrast such scenes with his own present state: a hired physician, whose chief regret must be the loss of a paying patient; an old housekeeper, whose tears would be quickly dried when the reading of his last testament would reveal the provisions he had made for her declining years; a young fellow-priest, losing a friend, perhaps, but gaining a promotion for himself. These were the attendants at his bedside. Ah, would God there were some to really care, and for his own sake!

He tried to fix his eyes upon the crucifix opposite, and to find some consolation in the remembrance of the greater suffering, the deeper loneliness of his God; but it brought no comfort to his grieving heart. Nothing would down the desire for the things that console the men of the world. When he looked over his own past he pronounced the judgment, "a failure"; when he turned his thoughts to the present, the sense of loneliness crowded out all other feelings. As for the future, no effort of mind or will could turn it to a source of either penitence or comfort.

A deep sigh escaped him. The assistant looked up hastily, thinking the end had come. Then the young priest noted the gloom written over the wan countenance, and was about to offer further words of religious admonition or prayer. For, accustomed to read the meanings of men's faces, he was beginning to wonder if some hidden sin were troubling the dying man. At this moment there was a muffled ring of the door-bell below. When the housekeeper returned, he told her in a whisper to send the people away. Then he was seized with a sudden inspiration, some thought of what he might wish if he were lying there in his own last hour. He hurried after the old woman.

“Let them all come in ; bring them to the room,” he ordered.

It was a motley group that filed slowly into the sick-chamber. There was old Peter McGrath, who had come to confession every week for ten years. He was followed by a younger man, decently clad in a suit of gray. It was Jimmy Moore, who had kept the pledge ever since the now dying priest had half carried, half led him home one bitter night three years ago. His wife and children were with him. Next came Mamie McGuire, a rather overdressed servant from the great house on the hill. With her was the wealthy mistress of that home. Mr. Michael Morris, late No. 65 in the county penitentiary, well-dressed, head erect, was the ninth in the little procession. He and Mamie were “steady company” now, and all the parish knew it and approved. Moritz Hoffmann, the old shoemaker, whose wooden leg had cost two monthly collections, stumped after the rest in a ludicrous attempt to walk quietly. Last of the group came a young man in a new clerical garb, just home from the seminary for the vacation preceding his appointment.

All stood a few moments in awkward silence, while their handkerchiefs were passed furtively

over their eyes. All had flowers in their hands, from the costly roses of Mrs. Marwood to the cheap paper carnations equally divided between the members of the Moore family.

It was Mrs. Moore who finally broke the stillness.

"Ah, Father, ye was the makin' of Jimmy. Me an' the childher is warm dressed and happy this winter. An' to think how it was three years back!" A pained look passed over the face of her husband, and he hastened to break in: "Yes, Father, it was you as saved me for this world and the next;" wherewith he began to sob aloud.

Mrs. Marwood wiped the tears from her eyes with a dainty bit of lace, and her well-bred face was red with weeping. "I owe my faith to you. You brought me into the Church when I was losing belief in all religions. It has been worth everything else to me."

Michael Morris broke down completely as he made his little speech: "They all know what I was, till you came and set me up and made a man out of me."

Mamie McGuire went red with shame, but could not refrain from uttering her tribute in a choking whisper: "An' God knows I'd a' been on the

streets to-day, if you hadn't saved me by the advice you give me in the confessional."

"And if you couldn't gif me a real leg, you haf made me so dat I can walk again already," chimed in the shoemaker.

The young cleric spoke so softly he could hardly be heard, save by the dying man. "Father, it was you who led me through all the weaknesses of youth; you who showed me what a true priest should be; you who encouraged me to perseverance. You have saved *me* to my vocation. If I am happy now, if I felt, last Sunday when I sang my first holy Mass, that an angel might envy me, I owe it all to you."

Then the physician spoke: "Yes, Father, there was a time when things were not going well with *me*. There were a lot of temptations. I dealt with the body and could not find the soul. One day when I was on the point of laughing to myself at the whole idea of the supernatural, I passed you as you hurried to the bed of a dying man. I remembered the things I had seen you do. I thought there is one man who *shows* the supernatural. You saved my faith."

Last of all the young assistant of these last few months came close to the bedside. He spoke in a

whisper, lest his words might scandalize the others. "Father, you did not know that when I came to you I was almost ready to yield myself to the sin that would have blasted my life on earth and lead me to eternal hell. Doubt was following close upon the heels of wilfully indulged occasion of evil. Another month would have made my name a scandalous byword to Catholics, a dark example for the enemies of truth to point at. Then I saw you. I watched you; I heard your confessions. If I am ever able to meet you in a better world than this, it will be to the glory of God, through you."

As his words ended, the wan look of bitter pain had passed from the face on the pillow. In its place shone the light of peace. The thin hand was raised in a last blessing upon the kneeling group. Slowly it formed the holy sign. The people half rose from their knees, then knelt again, as they saw the white lips still moving in prayer. The two priests bent close their ears to catch the faint whisper:

"Nunc dimittis, Domine, servum tuum in pace."

"Lord, let now Thy servant depart in peace."

The voice grew a little stronger, and even the faint whisper seemed to ring triumphantly:

“Quia viderunt oculi mei salutarem tuum;” “For my eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared from all generations; a light to lighten the nations, and the glory of Thy people Israel.”

The sound ceased, but still the lips moved slowly, and the priests were able to connect the feeble motion with the familiar words of praise:

*“Gloria—Patri et Filio—et—et Spiritui Sancto:
. . . Sicut erat—in principio—et nunc, . . . et
—nunc—et—et semper—et—in sæcula—sæcu-
lorum. . . Amen.”*

And the people who thronged the church at the solemn Requiem were heard to say that it hardly seemed necessary to pray for the repose of his soul. The white face wore the look as of having already gained the peace of heaven.

Abner the Jew

BY ANNA T. SADLIER

ABNER the Jew dwelt alone in his little shop in a side street of the great metropolis, dealing in such small wares as were within reach of the humble folk about him. He was accounted rich—such is usually the reputation of the children of Israel, but in reality his profits were comparatively small, and the sums which he had accumulated were by means of a far-seeing thrift and continual self-denial. He was alone now; he had had a daughter whom, in the pride of his heart, he had called Esther, because she was “exceeding fair,” with laughter in her eyes, the laughter of morning. As she grew, however, from childhood to womanhood, it seemed to Abner that she was precisely like her prototype, who smiled, loving and lovable, from the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures, long ago.

But Esther had gone away from him. She had married a rich man, a Christian at least in name, who had taken her to the other side of the ocean

that she might be apart from her former surroundings. The magic of love had enthralled her even more than the glitter of gold, and she had obeyed all too literally the Scriptural precept to forsake home and kindred and cleave unto her husband.

Abner the Jew, left alone, had suddenly felt himself very old and filled with an abiding sense of desolation, an alien in a strange land. Standing like the rest of his race with "inverted eyes," obstinately turned away from the light that had arisen in the East, he painfully and conscientiously followed his ancient ceremonies.

When in his shop he was always clad in a loose robe, girdled at the waist by a leather belt, and with a cap upon his head, which garb, combined with a flowing beard, gave him a singular and almost startling resemblance to one of the ancient patriarchs.

On a dull day in late autumn, when the shop seemed darker and more dingy than ever, the bell attached to the door to announce the arrival of incomers, clanged harshly. Abner came forth from the back of the shop and peered with dimmed eyes at the figure of a woman standing before the counter. After a moment's pause, he inquired:

"What are you pleased to want?"

“Charity.”

The answer startled him. Never, during his long residence in that neighborhood, had such a request reached his ears. He had his own charities, for he strictly fulfilled the letter, at least, of the Old Law concerning almsgiving, and gave freely to those of his own race. As a rule there were not many beggars among them and this was clearly a Gentile.

“You come to ask charity of me?” the old man said mildly. “Are there no Christians at your door?”

“I have asked and been refused,” the woman said. “I am starving. Worse than that, I have two little ones at home, perishing for want of food.”

The Jew’s eyes grew thoughtful, retrospective. He was thinking of many things, and through his mind flitted sentences of Holy Writ, which seemed to encourage benevolence toward strangers. The woman waited, scrutinizing his face eagerly, and at last she broke in upon his meditations:

“I am not quite an ordinary beggar,” she said; “once things were different. It is very hard upon me to ask for help, to beg of you to advance me a little money upon a picture.”

Abner's eyes were turned upon the petitioner; he perceived that her appearance, voice, and manner more clearly attested the truth of her statement than the mere words.

"I am not a money-lender," he declared, in the same even tones.

"If you were I would not have come to you," the suppliant answered. "There are too many sharks in that fraternity."

"You know that I am a Jew?"

"A believer in God the Father at least," the woman answered. "It is in the name of Jehovah that I ask you for this trifling help."

The Jew reverently bared his head. He felt that he dared not refuse. The woman, understanding, drew the picture from under her cloak. It was an exquisite miniature, richly framed. Abner extended his hand and took it. He started on perceiving that it was a representation of the Blessed Virgin. Recovering himself, he observed:

"Mary, of the royal house of David."

"*Mater Divina Gratia*," said the woman, referring to the Latin words on the edge of the frame.

The Jew frowned slightly, correcting his visitor.

"The Mother of Jesus of Nazareth, the law-giver," he said.

"The Mother of God!" exclaimed the visitor.

Abner, waiving any further discussion, carefully examined the miniature, whose value he saw at once, and the exquisite face, which had an added attraction for him in a resemblance, real or imaginary, to his lost Esther.

"You are certain it is yours?" he inquired.

"Most certain," the other replied. "It has been ours for very long and it is only the direst necessity that impels me to part with it, even for a time."

"How much shall I give you?" asked Abner. The visitor named a moderate sum, which she explained would be sufficient to support her until work could be procured. The Jew's naturally benevolent nature was softened by the woman's evident distress, as well as by the fancied likeness to Esther in the miniature, and he took the money from the till, assuring the petitioner that the picture would be quite safe in his hands.

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That picture had a strange fascination for Abner. In the early dusk of the winter afternoons, when he retired to his room behind the shop where he was so far removed from the din and dirt and

squalor of the thoroughfare, he lighted his one gas-jet and drawing the miniature from its place sat down to study the fair lineaments. It reminded him inevitably of his gay, his beloved, his beautiful Esther, while he also began to see in the face other and diviner traits. If the artist had had an earthly sitter, he had idealized and lent her those characteristics which are heavenly. And getting down his Testament and the old, rabbinical volumes, the Jew read those prophecies pointing to the Virgin Mother of the Messias, and the types by which she was foreshadowed. So that, at last, his racial prejudices began to fade away as the mists of morning fade before the golden fringes of the sun. And when his loneliness pressed hard upon him, and his desolation smote him sore, he stretched out his withered hands in supplication and in piteous appeal.

"Mater Divina Gratia!" and the cry came straight from his heart, "give me back my daughter."

When some months had passed, the woman came to pay her indebtedness, and to claim the picture. Abner felt strangely reluctant to let it go and noting that his visitor was still meanly clad and bore about her other evident signs of poverty, he offered

her a second and a larger sum, praying her only that the picture remain longer with him.

"I am lonely and very old," he declared, "and you have need, I am sure, of money."

Then the barrier of the visitor's reserve was broken down, and she told the old man how sore was her need and with what difficulty she had gathered together the sum which she had brought him. From that time forth a curious friendship united the Hebrew and this woman, who had been born to luxury and having experienced the sharpest stings of fortune, was living isolated now, with her two children, in this miserable slum. Many and many a time after that she was the recipient of benefactions from the Jew, who sent many a welcome gift of groceries or of clothing for the children; from time to time he advanced fresh loans of money, always on condition that the picture remain a little longer to cheer his solitude.

* * * * *

So matters continued until the old man fell ill one day, and every one in the neighborhood knew that Abner the Jew lay at the point of death. The owner of the picture heard this news with the rest, and hurried to the shop on the wings of friendship and gratitude. She found the aged Israelite

stretched upon his bed, raving in delirium. She waited to see if Abner would regain consciousness and if there was anything that she could do. Meantime, with many a deft touch, she put the forlorn room in order. She noted, as she moved about, that the picture, *her* picture, now hung upon the wall, directly facing the Hebrew's bed.

Just as a warm rose flush was tinging the sky of June, the old man suddenly sat upright, a light breaking over his face, a gladness coming into his eyes:

"See, she is there, there, there!" he cried, pointing toward a spot in the room. "More beautiful than Queen Esther, who chained a royal heart, more regal than Judith, more wise than Debbora. She is the Mother of—a God."

Then the awestricken watcher stole away to the nearest presbytery. The priest made haste to obey the summons to an urgent sick-call without inquiring into the circumstances, but when he reached the door of the shop, he turned and said to his conductor:

"Why, this man is a Jew!"

When he heard the woman's hurried explanation, however, he went in. The fever had subsided, the delirium had passed away. Yet, as the priest

came near him, he nodded his head in joyful recognition and pointed at the picture.

“You are a Christian priest,” he said. “Come nearer, nearer. I want to tell you. Yonder royal maiden of the house of David is the Mother of my God !”

He fell back exhausted. The effort, the act of faith had overtaxed his weakness and for a time he lay unconscious. The priest waited, while the pink flush which had rested on the picture changed to deep orange and died slowly, as the day faded and the shadows fell.

* * * * *

It was not death, however, which had seized upon the Israelite and slowly he recovered. The priest was in frequent attendance, as well as the owner of the picture, who was now enabled to repay Abner's many kindnesses. One afternoon as she sat beside the Jew, who was up that day for the first time, the shop-bell clanged more harshly than ever, as if the door had been opened by some one in haste or agitation. Abner's charitable attendant answered the summons and her breath was all but taken away by the figure which stood within the quaint and dingy shop—a tall and lovely woman, from whom first youth had departed to

leave a half maturity more beauteous still. Her costume, rich and elegant, gave evidence of wealth, as did the carriage which the other perceived dimly through the window. It was such an equipage, in fact, as did not often visit that neighborhood. Abner's kind attendant gazed upon this vision, her face hardening as a sudden flash of intuition crossed her mind, whereas the newcomer started visibly on perceiving that it was a woman who answered the shop-bell. When she spoke it was with evident agitation.

"Are you," she asked, "the proprietor of this establishment? But no, do not tell me that the shop no longer is kept by Abner the Jew."

She put out an imploring hand as if to ward off an impending blow, while she made a fresh and still more agitated appeal. "Do not say that he is gone away or—dead!"

The woman regarding her so intently answered with a sternness which was due to the condemnation of this other, swiftly forming in her mind.

"Abner the Jew has ceased to exist."

A trembling seized upon the visitor. She shook as with a palsy, her face turned pale, and its anguish was pitiable. It melted her accuser's sternness:

"Come!" she said simply, for she no longer doubted the correctness of her surmise. She ushered her into the cheerless room, where sat the old man in his quaint gaberdine and cap, like some Jew of biblical days, the light of a tremulous, eager hope upon his aged countenance. For he had heard or dreamed he heard the echo of a voice. Scarce had that radiant vision appeared upon the threshold when he stretched his withered hands towards her with a piteous cry:

"Esther, my child, my child!"

"My father!" the woman cried, and fell at the old man's feet, sobbing and hiding her head in the folds of his shabby gown. The old man's withered hand was laid in benediction on that bowed head.

"Forgiveness!" she sobbed.

"And blessing," Abner said, his quavering voice raised in a new solemnity; "the blessing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rest upon you, the blessing—of Mary's Son."

The weeping woman started.

"It is He who has brought you here," Abner continued, "at the prayer of Mary, His Mother, *Mater Divina Gratia*. She has heard the cry of a desolate heart."

He pointed as he spoke to the picture on the

wall, touched by the evening light; his gaze rested upon it lovingly with infinite thankfulness and content, while his lips repeated softly: "*Mater Divina Gratia.*"

The daughter, in bewilderment and fancying that her father's mind was wandering, still kneeling, turned to the other woman.

"I do not understand. I have been long away through circumstances which I could not control." She answered thus the unspoken condemnation which she had read in the stranger's face, and hastily continued:

"I, too, am a Christian, but when I left, my father was so intense an Israelite that only his native gentleness kept him from cursing me because of my marriage with a Gentile. And now——"

"I have already told you," the other answered, smiling this time with sympathetic cordiality, "that Abner the Jew has ceased to exist."

A Double Marriage

BY MARY E. MANNIX

Two young people sat under a large poplar-tree in the moonlight, talking softly to each other, as lovers do.

“Angelita,” said the young man, “I can scarcely believe that a month from to-day we will be starting away together—on our wedding-trip.”

“Nor I,” replied the girl. “And, Florentio—it will be so different, going with you whom I have known all my life long. There was Mercedes Dinaro, she married a man she had only known a month. Fancy, a single month! And she went away with him ever so far. And she seemed happy.”

“He was a very nice fellow, they tell me,” rejoined Florentio. “They will soon get acquainted.”

The girl laughed.

“I imagine they are acquainted by now,” she said. “It is six months since Mercedes married. And there was Dolores Serrano. She married such an old man, *such* an old man, Florentio.

Can you understand how she ever married him?"

"No," responded her companion, lighting a cigarette. "I could never understand how any man, old or young, could want that fat, lazy Dolores for his wife."

Then they both laughed together, and Florentio began to play his guitar in the silence.

"Yes, it is very different with us," resumed Angelita, when he paused to tighten a string. "We have always known each other."

"And always loved each other," added Florentio. "I can not remember the time you were not the dearest thing in the world to me, Lita."

"Your father will miss you, Florentio," said the girl after a pause. "Of course you will not be far away, but it will be a little lonely for him in the house with only Guadalupe. But he can come over often."

"What are you saying, Lita?" inquired her lover in surprise. "What do you mean by saying he can come over? We are going to live with my father."

"In your house?"

"Certainly. In my father's house. Where else should we live? How foolish it would be for us to build a new one, with so much room where we are."

"Who is talking of building a new one?" asked the girl, a little impatiently. "I have never thought of anything but living at *our* house, where I live now."

"With your mother?"

"With my mother."

"But, dearest—it is the part of the wife to follow the husband. Don't you know that?"

"And what of mamma? Must she be left to live alone but for old Brigida? Mamma, whom I have never left for a single day?"

"She could come, too."

"And shut up her house?"

"No; she might rent it?"

"And leave her dear garden?"

"Well, we have a garden."

"She would not think of it, Florentio. And I would not ask her. Oh, no, we must live at Casa Bonita."

"It can not be, Lita. My father would not hear of it, and I am sure your mother will not expect it."

"Will not expect it? Why, we have talked of it over and over. Mamma had planned to give us a little sitting-room of our own. And at our house it is far more homelike than in the big, bare

rooms of Los Flores, where no mistress has lived since your mother died."

"It can be made very comfortable," Florentio said, a little stiffly, "and your mother can superintend the furnishing. My father expected that. To-morrow morning he is going over to see her about it."

Angelita stood up.

"He need not," she said. "Mamma shall not live alone, and I shall not ask her to leave her own home to live in your father's house. Your father, Florentio, who was once her lover. You know, Florentio, that there has always been a stiffness between them—and then to ask her—Oh, Florentio!"

There was pathos, even despair, in her voice. She moved slowly away from her lover, who still sat on the bench.

"You are unreasonable, Angelita," he said.

"And you are tyrannical!" she cried. "I will *not* leave my mother's house for that of your father. Now I am going in."

"Sleep on it, sleep on it, Lita," replied Florentio, rising to accompany her. "To-morrow you will feel differently."

"Do not come with me," said the girl. "I prefer

to go alone. And you need not come again till you have changed your mind."

"Very well," answered her lover, becoming vexed in his turn. And he left her abruptly.

Doña Maria knew something had happened as soon as she saw her daughter's face. But being a wise and prudent, as well as an affectionate mother, she asked nothing. At the end of the second day, which, like the first, had passed without a visit from Florentio, Angelita told her what had occurred. She sympathized entirely with her daughter. And thus the matter rested.

It was the same with the father of Florentio, who had heard the story on the first evening. He had hoped that morning and reflection would bring better thoughts to Angelita; besides, he was of the order that can neither brook nor understand anything but submission in women. Yet he was a very kindly man, and as time passed, and he saw how unhappy the affair had made his son, he, too, began to feel uneasy. With a vague idea of mending matters, though he did not know how it could be done, Don Refugio concluded he would go over and visit his neighbor. As he descended from the rather bleak-looking house on the hill, set in the

midst of great, blooming orchards, to the smaller one in the valley almost hidden in its beautiful garden, his thoughts were busy with the past. Thicker and faster they crowded upon him as he walked, till when at last he reached the Casa Bonita and saw its comely mistress seated sewing on the piazza, a swift, sudden resolve seized upon him; a resolve that an hour before had never entered his mind since a day twenty-five years dead, when he and Maria Argüello had said their last words of love in that very garden.

She received him graciously, bade him be seated, and he proceeded at once to business. It seemed to him that a spirit within him, independent of himself, had taken sudden, insistent, and altogether pleasant possession.

"Maria," he began, and her cheek flushed. It was many a year since Don Refugio had so addressed her. He observed the flush, and noted it on his program.

"This is a pretty business about our children, is it not?"

"That depends upon your meaning, Señor," she replied, with a decided emphasis on the last word. "If it is that they are both unwilling to concede it is but natural. For me, I feel with my daugh-

ter, I could not bear to give her up altogether. She is all that I have since her father died."

"Since her father died!" repeated her visitor with an incredulous air. "You know well, Maria," again the widow's cheek flushed, and her eyes sparkled, "you know well, Maria," he repeated remorselessly, "there was no love in that marriage, on either side."

"That may have been," she responded. "But it was over long ago. And I do not think it in good taste on your part to refer to it."

"I, of all the world, am the only one who should have that privilege. But to the point. You and I once loved each other as dearly, perhaps more tenderly than these two children do. A foolish quarrel separated us. I will confess that I was to blame."

"Yes, you were," said the widow, in a low voice.

"I was jealous, unreasonably jealous."

"And I was proud."

"I married a good woman. I loved her. But deep in my heart, Maria, was a chord that no other but yourself has ever touched. Do not let us make our children unhappy. Do not permit them to repeat the story of our youth."

There were tears in the widow's fine eyes. "You are kind, very kind, Don Refugio," she said. "But I can not part from my daughter. It is not necessary. And, moreover, to go to live in *your* house. Oh, can you not understand it? I, to live in your house! Oh!"

"But listen, Maria, listen——"

"I can not," she replied passionately. "I thought better of you, Don Refugio. But it is so with all men. They are thoughtless, they are arbitrary, it is only to make things easy for themselves. But you! I had believed you could have seen the impropriety of what you ask."

"But listen to me, Maria, I implore you——"

"Can you not see how—how people would talk? What has a poor, lonely woman but her reputation?"

"But, Maria——"

"Why do you take that liberty? Why do you call me Maria?" she cried, her cheeks blazing. "And to ask me, *me*, to live in your house! Oh, you are dense, you are cruel!"

"Nevertheless, that is precisely what I am here to ask you to do," answered Don Refugio, with great coolness. "As my wife, Maria," he concluded in the gentlest and most persuasive of voices.

The widow's face was suddenly hidden in her shapely hands, hands which her admirer had once thought the most beautiful in the world.

"Ah, Maria," he pleaded, "it is because I love you that I call you so. Why should we not take up the story where we left it off? Why should either of us be lonely in our old age?"

"Ah, why?" she answered sweetly, glancing up at him; and then as though ashamed of her surrender, again hiding her face.

Surprised and delighted at his swiftly-won victory Don Refugio seized both hands and lifted her to her feet.

"Come, then," he said, gaily and masterfully, "come then and find those troublesome children. There is Lita in the garden, and yonder I see Florentio strolling about the orchard. They are pouting, but longing for each other. Come, my dear, let us tell them they can make up and be happy."

A Page from Real Life

BY MRS. FRANCIS CHADWICK

MISS ELIZABETH SEVERN, her home in England being broken up by the death of her mother, her last surviving relative, had come out to Canada to seek a situation as governess. This she was lucky enough to find in the house of Mr. Henry Norman, an influential banker, where she was employed to teach a very interesting little boy, the Normans' only child.

Miss Severn was excellently educated, and of a very sweet and engaging disposition; and if not pretty nor even very young (having arrived at her thirtieth year) she possessed the gift of blooming out into unexpected beauty at times, especially when anything pleased her; when, with a soft glow on her cheeks, and a luster in her dark-gray eyes, she compelled no little admiration, though as an ordinary thing one would pass her twenty times a day without noticing her, so quiet a figure was she

in the very neutral, rather quaint attire she affected, perhaps as suited to her altered fortunes and subordinate position.

Mrs. Norman's name and position counted for much in the social world, and but for Miss Severn's unexceptionable credentials, the doors of this stately mansion would never have opened to her. But the family connections of a governess who could truly boast of her descent from the Emperor Severus during his occupation of Britain in the year A.D. 211 weighed heavily with Mrs. Norman, with whom good birth had a distinct value, though it did almost seem incongruous — employing a person of such illustrious descent in teaching a very tiny boy to read and write and taking him out walking.

But Miss Severn's gentle manner was most reassuring. Nothing seemed farther from her thoughts than her august ancestors as she went diligently through her duties, and accepted the dull, daily round of a governess's life in apparent cheerfulness. Nevertheless she suffered dreadfully from homesickness, and in the evening, her free time, when little Herbert had been transferred to the charge of his nurse, she used to sit looking wistfully over the house-tops in the direction of

that England which at least held the graves of all she had loved on earth, hoping for nothing beyond her somewhat dreary life and dreading to look beyond to an unprovided old age. She had already been several months with the Normans, and grown accustomed to the quiet routine, when, on a bright autumn morning, she and little Herbert were returning from their daily walk. They were already close to the high iron railing inclosing the Normans' grounds, when she was startled by warning shouts, and glancing at the cross street above them beheld a runaway horse bearing down upon them. With wonderful presence of mind she seized her little charge, swung him high into the air, and cast him over the rail onto the grass. Then she raised herself by the ironwork and shielded herself as well as she could from the maddened animal. But he, knocking violently against her as he swerved and rushed by, threw her heavily to the ground, where she lay unconscious of the cheers the onlookers set up in appreciation of her bravery. She was tenderly lifted and carried into the house, where she awoke to find a kind-faced doctor sitting beside her holding her pulse.

"Oh, now that is well!" he said, carefully observing the eyes in search of injury to the brain.

“Will you oblige me by drinking this little draught?”

“Little Herbert?”

“Perfectly well, thanks to you, and playing away busily in the nursery marshaling an immense army of leaden soldiers.”

“Thank God, thank God!”

“Truly, yes, let us thank Him sincerely; and under God, you, His worthy instrument.”

Miss Severn’s eyes filled with tears—grateful, happy tears. The doctor smiled sympathetically.

“It might have been very serious,” he said; “you ran great risk, and have done a plucky thing, a very plucky thing; but happily it has turned out well. Nevertheless, I must ask you to lie still and rest until I say the word. Even Mrs. Norman is not to see you. You are the heroine of the hour, and with the best and most grateful intentions your visitors would do you more harm than good. I will leave you in Miss Minton’s charge till you are quite well again. Mrs. Norman begs that you will try to feel as if you were in your own old home in England, and to remember that the object of all our lives at present is to make your convalescence as delightful as possible. With Miss Minton things always go well; she is the ideal nurse, and

I always declare that it is worth while getting ill to have her nurse one."

"Flattering away as usual, doctor?" said Miss Minton, coming in at the moment. "You heard me on the stairs, eh?"

Miss Minton was a handsome, dark-eyed girl of twenty-seven or eight, with the pleasantest voice and manner, yet Miss Severn, who had the poorest possible opinion of her own attractions, felt a little chill at the prospect of being tended by this gifted being, so highly commended by the doctor, and could have wished for a less attractive attendant. Though here began a friendship that only ended with life.

Verily, the governess seemed from the days of her accident to have passed, as in a fairy-story, into some pleasant, enchanted land, where it seemed everybody's duty to think of her, and her only. She might have been wearing Aladdin's ring, so radiant were the flowers, fruits, and books that filled her room. And among them heaps of visiting-cards from all Mrs. Norman's smart friends, inquiring for Miss Severn, who a week or two before was but the quiet, somewhat neglected, and wholly obscure governess in the dull sitting-room in the top story, looking out across the sea.

sorehearted and lonely. Oh, yes, these were really happy days, culminating (though she would not acknowledge it to herself) in that quiet evening hour, when, his more urgent patients off his hands, Dr. Crawford would come in, weary after a long day, and very glad, occasionally at least, to take a quiet cup of tea with Miss Severn, now ensconced on a sofa near the window.

“And” (as she often said long after) “he used to look so very grand and stately, that I, feeling like an intrusive mouse, used to get flurried with the tea-cups on my little table, and make dreadful mistakes about the cream and sugar, which last he never took voluntarily, but often accepted rather than worry me about it; which was characteristic of the dear doctor.”

“Very delightful, this,” he would say, “but rather unprofessional, you know. I hope none of the Grundy family will find it out.”

Yes, they were happy times, as even the doctor felt on that last evening when he made his professional adieux.

“But I will drop in now and then in the character of friend, if you don’t mind,” he said, wandering away oddly enough to the window, and gazing absently out into the snowy world without. It

almost looked as if the doctor were blushing. Such an absurd thing to fancy! Perhaps it was the light, and Miss Severn felt as if she must steady her voice before she spoke.

"I hope indeed you will, doctor."

That was the conventional answer certainly, and did not, she hoped, reveal her sorrow at the ending of this little friendship, for all pleasant things did come to an end, she had found in her life; or rather with her they had never begun.

"I can never hope to thank you," she said, feeling that she ought to try to tell him of her gratitude at least.

The doctor waved his hand gently, bowed, and went away, as if afraid to speak.

It was now Miss Severn's turn to blush, and a light came into her eyes.

"He is sorry, too!" she said, and was looking so very pretty when Miss Minton—who had been out doing a little shopping for her—came back, that that astute young woman smiled to herself.

"He can't help being nice to his patients, it's just his way," she thought; "but I do hope she won't take it too seriously, poor dear!"

After this Miss Severn mended rapidly, and was anxious to resume her teaching in spite of Mrs.

Norman's earnest wish, feeling that she would be happier occupied.

"Not till Dr. Crawford gets back," said Mrs. Norman, one day at dinner, when Miss Severn had been arguing the point with her. Then Miss Severn knew that he had been away; else, perhaps, he might have come as he had said he would.

"Crawford got home to-day," said Mr. Norman. "I met him for a moment. Asked for all, especially the patient, and he said he would try and look in to-morrow. He has been down to Washington for the Medical Convention, you know, and was looking tired. That sort of thing is wearing; men saying the same thing, over and over again, in different ways. Yes, he will come to-morrow. Take care, Miss Severn; you mustn't lose your heart. He's a very fetching chap, as we old fellows can be now and then."

Miss Severn smiled, blushing a little, in her old-fashioned way.

"I will try my best to avoid such a folly," she said, at which Mr. Norman—a man of the lordly, superior type in his views of womankind—looked amused, and Mrs. Norman suddenly thoughtful.

"Wouldn't it be beautiful!" she thought, glanc-

ing meditatively at her governess, whom she now regarded as a dear friend. "Nice looking—certainly distinguished-looking, and [the Emperor Severus suddenly recurring to her memory] of decidedly good birth. Which of us can number a Roman emperor—or any emperor—among our ancestors? Then a disposition and character truly admirable! She shall be in to-morrow when he comes; and I must really go to the Children's Aid; I don't know what they must think of me there!"

"Two or three kinds of little hot cakes for tea this afternoon, Ellen," she said to the parlor maid next morning. "Serve it in the library, and have a good wood-fire. Miss Severn will see Dr. Crawford when he comes. You may say at the door that I was obliged to go out, and felt so sorry——"

Then this busy matchmaker went upstairs to Miss Severn, and explained the situation.

"I may get in before tea is over," she said to reassure the governess. "You know it is only right that he *should* come to see you before you go back to your teaching. So you mustn't feel nervous; and put on your pretty gray dress, dear, to oblige me, and the little fichu. We must show the doctor how well his patient is looking. I

won't be long at the Children's Aid. You mustn't mind my going, and [with a parting smile] I'm sure the doctor won't!"

And here was the afternoon, and Elizabeth embroidering in the library, dressed obediently in the gray and the little fichu; her dark hair braided classically at the back of her head in the simple style that men consider denotes the "superior woman," above all such frivolities as hair-pads, curls, etc. There was a little effort on her part to receive the doctor naturally, she being of a child-like simplicity and incapable of wiles; but she did her best, and talked a little more quickly and excitedly than was her wont, while the doctor gazed at her with distinct pleasure, admiring the expressive eyes and the simple coiffure which showed her suitability as a wife for a physician of much standing, in case——

"May I tell you how much I admire that extremely pretty dress?" he said. (Clever Mrs. Norman! wise in the weakness of men.) They had by this time exhausted the amenities of greeting, and the doctor was, almost unconsciously, mentally enthroning the sweet-faced woman opposite as the tutelar divinity of his "ain fireside."

"I am very glad you like it," murmured Miss

Severn, trying not to blush as too juvenile a weakness for a woman of her age.

“It suits its wearer, which is the highest tribute I can pay it,” thus the doctor, his tone speaking volumes.

He brought his chair nearer to hers, and became impressive in an admiring silence, during which Miss Severn gazed constrainedly into the fire.

“I am an old foggy, dear Miss Severn,” he said. “Yes, yes, an old foggy, and, as you know, a widower; but I can fancy renewed youth and happiness lasting until death, with you beside me.

“But you mustn’t *cry*,” he said gently, taking away her hands from her face. “Why should you? If you don’t want to bind up your life with an old fellow like me, you must just frankly tell me so. On the other hand, if you can manage to care for me a little—in spite of this white poll of mine——

“What! You do already? Believe me, dearest, this is great happiness for me; it’s like—it’s like the sun coming out gloriously toward the end of a long, dreary day, promising a perfect evening. Here is your shelter henceforth, Elizabeth,” and he held out his arms.

Behold, therefore, as we who watched did be-

hold, the unpretending governess transformed into Mrs. Gregory Crawford, beautifully dressed and housed, and driving about, as the years went by, in her sumptuous carriage, voted by common consent one of the luckiest women in town. And to hear her speak of the doctor was a study of a woman's heart.

"He is so good, so kind, and so *pious*," she would say. "Do you know we never sleep, no matter how hard has been his day, till we say our prayers together, to thank God for our great happiness. But what I fear is, that it cannot last."

Was it a presentiment?

A very few months after this their idolized son—a boy of six—was smitten with diphtheria, supposed to have been transmitted to him by his father, who was attending a particularly virulent case just then, which required much personal contact.

Mrs. Crawford had a tiny, delicate baby at the time, and was forbidden to enter the sickroom; and could only speak to her boy through the carbolic sheet hanging at the door.

"How is my darling Cyril?" she would ask, as cheerfully as possible, each morning, and he would answer:

"Much better, dearest mummie," until the morning when the little voice was silent forever more.

In the terrible grief which followed the heart-broken mother was too absorbed to notice her husband's failing health which he was at great pains to conceal from her, knowing all human aid to be useless. It was only in the following spring that he gently prepared his wife for the probability of a parting which she could not, or rather would not, believe; until he awakened her one night asking her to telephone for his lifelong friend, Dr. Gibson.

"I am so sorry to disturb you, dear," he said, "but I fear I am very ill."

"What can I do for you?" she pleaded. "Surely you yourself can tell me something that will relieve you."

"You can do nothing, dearest, but it is possible Gibson may help me a little."

She fled to the telephone, where she delayed a few minutes, coming back to find him, the beloved of her heart, dead. The city mourned the death of her noble husband with the desolate widow; and rich and poor alike followed him to the grave; women sobbing aloud in the church for the loss of

this kind, good friend. But she, shut up in her stately home, lived a solitary life but for her child, caring little when she became seriously ill, and went through a martyrdom of suffering. She sent word to us one day, asking us to come and see her before she too passed out of the world, and talked about the happy days long past.

“You remember I often told you how I lost my dear parents, how our pleasant home was broken up, and even before that, our, my mother’s and my long struggle with poverty. Then the dear doctor came like a light into my life, blessed saint that he was. I have often thought and feared that he might have married me, the poor governess, through sheer pity. It would have been just like him. I must have seemed so forlorn at the time of my accident, though I do think [wistfully] that he loved me. Then my children came and how I thanked God for them! My darling Cyril, he is safe—he and his father waiting for me, only poor little Bess, my own poor little Bess——

“I pray for patience, believe me, but I must confess I feel as our poor first parents must have felt the morning after their expulsion from Paradise; cast out from the garden of delight into the

wilderness. But not for long, thank God, not for long."

One's heart aches when one passes the solemn house, mercifully empty, but soon to be turned into a private hospital for ladies in straitened circumstances, as arranged for in Mrs. Gregory Crawford's will.

A Double Mistake

BY MAGDALEN ROCK

THE thin, elderly gentleman in the waiting-room of the great heart specialist, Dr. Hauton, was gazing intently at a copy of the *Times*; the stout, elderly gentleman in the same apartment was stealing furtive glances from behind the shelter of the *Daily Graphic* at his neighbor. All at once the latter threw down his paper and moved forward with outstretched hand.

“Why, Clifford, I couldn’t believe that it was you!” Mr. Ballard cried. “How are you? Nothing serious amiss, I hope?”

“Dr. Hauton must judge as to that,” Mr. Clifford replied with a slight smile. “I shouldn’t have known you, Hugh, but for your voice.”

“And I have been five minutes in deciding that you were Stephen Clifford,” Mr. Ballard responded. “Well, as we haven’t met for more than a decade of years, and have altered considerably, that isn’t wonderful. You are not going back to Clifford Hall to-night?”

"No, now that I am in London—I have not been in it for the past ten years—there are some things I should see to."

"Good! Then I shall expect you to dine with me. I won't take any excuse, for I want a good talk over the old days at Eton and Oxford. Dress! Nonsense, come as you are. I am a bachelor like yourself; and you won't meet any one excepting my nephew, Robert, and a friend of his. And should the two young men fall in with any more entertaining host we'll have none of them."

The door of the consulting-room opened and a lady came out.

"It's my turn now," Mr. Ballard said, "and Hauton is sure to tell me I don't take exercise enough. As if a hard-worked barrister could find the time! Now, Clifford, you're coming? There's my address."

Mr. Clifford would very much have preferred to decline his former friend's invitation. When one has lived a solitary recluse for many years he is apt to become shy or morose, or both. However, he promised, and ten minutes before the appointed time he was shown into Mr. Ballard's library in Harley Street. His host was seated in an easy-

chair by the fire, and welcomed his guest with very evident sincerity.

"Take this chair, Clifford. My rascal of a nephew has sent a note to say that he and Danvers will be a quarter of an hour late. Pretty cool customers, the young fellows of the present day."

"Danvers—not Piers Danvers, the war correspondent?" Mr. Clifford inquired.

"The very man. Clever fellow he is, too. He never thoroughly recovered from his South African wound, and has been under the care of a German oculist. He was threatened with loss of his eyesight, but the German doctor says that rest and care will do wonders for him. At present he's idling. I hope Hauton did not consider you ill?"

"Oh, as to that, I knew myself that my heart was in a pretty bad condition. I may live years, I may not live a week. He prescribes quiet and absence of worry."

"Clifford Hall is as quiet as a monastery, surely, and as to worry—what on earth have you to worry about, Clifford?"

"Not very much, I suppose. The disposal of my property."

"Oh! I thought Harry Clifford was to be the heir?"

"Harry Clifford can never inherit the property, and my next nearest relations are Protestants."

"Harry is not dead!"

"No. I'll tell you the story, Ballard. I must see my lawyers to-morrow and settle affairs. Sometimes I have thought of leaving the old place to some Religious Order, but Father Wingham discourages that idea. I believe he'd rather see Harry back."

"What did Harry do?"

"You remember my sister, Elinor?" Mr. Clifford said, and the barrister bent his head. Long years before he had loved the beautiful Elinor Clifford, and because of that love he had brought no other woman to his hearth as wife.

"She was engaged to be married to Lord Crewe, the representative of one of our oldest Catholic families. It was a match satisfying to every one. Both were young, handsome, and good."

"I know. And then Lord Crewe was killed in a railway accident on his wedding-eve. I remember well the tragic circumstances of his death."

"It was years before Elinor was able to take up the ordinary duties of life. Then she settled down at Clifford Hall. She was a saint." Mr. Clifford paused, and then resumed.

"She had always worn the engagement ring given her by her lover. It was of diamonds and rubies, and very valuable. But more valuable still was another ring she wore. It had been given by Queen Katharine of Aragon to one of my ancestors. These rings my sister had always worn, and she asked that they be buried with her."

"And?"

"Harry took them when she lay dead before the altar of the little church she had built for the convenience of the few Catholic families of the moorland!"

"Impossible!"

"So I should have said but for the evidence against him. He tacitly admitted his guilt."

"I could never believe Harry guilty of such an atrocious crime."

"By my sister's wish her coffin was left in the church for a night previous to interment. After the dawn I rose and walked to the church. Harry was just coming out. I went in. The lid of the coffin was unfastened, and I became possessed with a desire to look once more on Elinor's face. The rings were gone, and from the appearance of her hand they had been rudely removed. I saw Harry immediately after the funeral, and told

him that after the occurrence of the night he could have no desire to remain at Clifford Hall. He looked at me steadily a few moments, and then said he agreed with me, and that he had better go away at once. I gave him a check for a substantial amount, and he left that night. I heard he went to Australia. Could I leave the old place to one capable of such a sacrilege?"

"It sounds incredible. Harry seemed a straightforward, decent young fellow," the barrister said. Then in a different voice: "Here are the laggards."

Introductions were gone through, and the party moved to the dining-room, where Robert Ballard and Piers Danvers had the conversation very much to themselves. The latter was a thin, keen-faced young man, ready to talk of his adventures during the Boer War. He was an excellent *raconteur*, and by and by the two older men forgot their former conversation, and gave proper attention to his stories. A chance remark from the senior Ballard regarding the locality of Clifford Hall turned Danvers' thoughts in a new direction.

"I once had a bit of an adventure on the Yorkshire moors," he said. "I had received a telegram from the editor of the *Public News*, offering me a job could I be in London early next day. I ar-

rived at our little railway station to see the London train vanishing round a curve. There was no other train till a late hour the following morning, so I decided to ride southward to a large station, where the express from the north stopped early in the morning. The night threatened to be wet, but I made fair headway. When more than half of my journey was done a heavy shower came on. I wore only an ordinary cycling suit, and I had no cape. Close at hand was a church, and a light shone from its window. There was no other building near and I tried the door. It opened to my touch and I walked in. The church was a Catholic one; a lamp burned before the altar, and in front of the altar was a coffin. I hesitated a moment only. As I said, there was no other building at hand; the rain was coming down in torrents, and I was not timid. I settled myself in a cushioned seat, and dropped asleep. I was roused by the entrance of a man——”

Mr. Clifford had listened intently.

“A young man?” he interrupted.

“No, rather an oldish man. He was tall and thin, and walked with a slight limp. He proceeded to the coffin. The lid was not screwed down apparently. He removed it, and I saw him

take something—a ring or rings—from the dead person's fingers. As he walked down the church the face of a young man appeared a moment at the door, and then disappeared."

"Go on." Mr. Clifford's face was pale. The narrator looked at him sharply.

"Yes, yes, go on," Mr. Ballard urged; "go on, Danvers. What did the man do?"

"He walked to where a statue stood near the doorway. It was rather a small statue. I think it was one of St. Anthony. The man moved it, and, I fancied, deposited what he had taken from the dead person about the pedestal. The light was faint, and I could not see plainly."

"Good God!" Mr. Clifford cried. Beads of perspiration were on his forehead. His host poured some cordial into a glass, and said:

"Drink this, and don't worry. Should Danvers' story be true——"

"Of course it is true," Danvers said rather stiffly.

"When did the incident take place?" Mr. Ballard inquired.

"Let me see—it must be ten years ago," Danvers replied. "And the story is finished. I had barely time to catch the express; the rain was

over, and I cycled to Grimsouth and caught the train."

"And you know nothing further of the man?"

"No—my own affairs occupied me," Danvers answered and paused. He looked at Mr. Clifford. "The man, so far as I can judge, looked like you."

"I must have been the man," Mr. Clifford groaned, "and for years I have held another guilty for the act I did myself. In my youth I used to walk in my sleep and must have done so that night, being upset by my sister's death."

Mr. Ballard explained matters to the young men.

"Yes," Danvers, who seemed to know something of many matters, said, "I have heard of people being cured of the habit of sleep-walking, yet under pressure of excitement returning to the practice."

Next day the two old men and the two young men journeyed to Clifford Hall. Danvers at once recognized the little church as the one wherein he had tarried, and young Ballard stood on a chair and moved the statute of St. Anthony.

"Here they are, here they are!" he said in triumph. "Lying in the hollow of the pedestal! Hurrah! The two rings are safe and sound!"

"But why should your nephew have gone away

at all?" Danvers inquired later. "Except he imagined that you, Mr. Clifford, were stealing the rings?"

"The boy must have thought so, and thought, too, that I felt humiliated at being discovered," Mr. Clifford responded. "You saw a young man at the door, you say?"

"Yes; a fair-haired young man."

"I wish I knew where to find him!" Mr. Clifford sighed. "He went to Australia."

Danvers thought a moment.

"There was a Clifford, a Harry Clifford, among the Australians who came to South Africa as volunteers. I remember some one speaking of an act of bravery he did. I didn't see the man myself."

With this clue a smart London detective went to work, with the result that Harry Clifford came to Clifford Hall ere the end of the year. Mr. Ballard, his nephew, and Danvers, spent their Christmas at the old hall, and the returned Colonial admitted that he had believed that his uncle was stealing the rings.

"What else was open to me?" he questioned. "I saw him take them off his sister's finger, and I never knew he walked in his sleep."

"The rings have been placed in Elinor's tomb," Mr. Clifford said. "It was a double mistake."

Maid Marian

BY ANNA T. SADLIER

NEVER shall I forget that day of the twelfth of July, in the year of Our Lord 1704, and the adventures which then befell. I had taken passage on a homeward-bound vessel, *The Phœnix*, Captain Stolton, master, having with me my daughter, Marian. This latter had been finishing her education with the Cloistered Ladies outside of Dublin, and was now looking forward with pleasurable anticipations to life in Manhattan, where, being motherless, she was to preside over my household, which was situated at that time upon Wall Street.

Our voyage was, for the most part, of the most agreeable character, and we were fortunate in having on board three gentlemen passengers, the younger of whom, Mr. Philip French, was of a more particular interest. From the very outset he distinguished my daughter by attentions which under other circumstances than those offered by our restricted life on shipboard I had deemed too personal.

Not that there was any objection to the young gentleman, who came of an honorable family, long established in the colonies of New Netherlands, and who was of a pleasing person, a handsome and open countenance, and a manly bearing. He had, moreover, the signal advantage, rare enough among persons of our own quality in those days in New York, to be of the Catholic faith. My reasons, then, for regarding with disfavor his unremitting attentions to my daughter were her extreme youth, being barely turned eighteen, and the hope that I had cherished of keeping her with me for some time longer to preside over my establishment.

To return to my story—that is to say, of what befell upon that twelfth day of July, with a high sea running and a wind blowing sharply from the north. We were standing alongside of Sandy Hook, hoping for the speedy termination of our five weeks' voyage, when our ship's master caught sight of a craft which he took to be an outward-bound vessel under English colors, and so at the first felt but little anxiety. Nevertheless there were points about the vessel, or, as they termed it in nautical phraseology, about "the cut of her jib," which awakened apprehensions in certain

old sea-dogs among the crew, and these they made bold to communicate to the captain. He being open-minded and of excellent judgment, so far heeded their warnings as to head his vessel shorewards, hoping to run her in upon that low strip of sand which was called "the Hook."

No sooner had the strange craft become aware of his design than she sent two shots whizzing over the water. I confess that this was far from being an agreeable surprise to me, I being too advanced in years to desire adventure, even if my mind had ever run in that direction. Moreover, I had to consider my motherless girl and the dreadful straits to which she might be reduced in the event of our capture by this vessel, or of the loss of my own life. While I was revolving in my mind as to what course I should pursue, I espied Marian herself coming up the companion ladder wrapped in a tarpaulin, with a seaman's cap drawn down over her curls. Her eyes—such beautiful eyes they were—gleamed with mischief; her complexion was fresh and rosy from the salt air, and she made a bewitching picture in that uncouth attire, which at another time I should have held to be something unbecoming. But this was not a moment for over-niceness in such details. Immediately in

her wake came our gallant young Colonial, and even in my actual perplexity and suspense I could not choose but regard him as a fine specimen of manhood and no mean protector for any damsel in the emergency that was like to confront us.

The other two passengers on board, who were of middle age and of the unadventurous merchant-class, displayed visible uneasiness at the present juncture. Together we all stood while the captain conferred with his first officer, and orders were given, sharp and imperative, whereat the seamen ran hither and thither, climbing into the shrouds, putting on all sail with much creaking and straining of ropes. The wind continued to blow in short, sharp gusts, which would have been most grateful to relieve the fiery heat of that July day had it not hindered our progress shorewards.

My daughter's eyes sparkled with interest, and the pink color in her cheeks was rather heightened than abated by the perils of the hour. Philip French was likewise unconcerned, exchanging merry jests and quips with her whom he had elected to call "Maid Marian," because of her fancy for a kirtle of Lincoln green which she had very commonly worn during the voyage. This badinage was varied by occasional glances of ten-

derness which I perceived the young gentleman to exchange with my little one and a murmured word or two which were not meant for my old ears. I also was aware that the youth cast from time to time a keen glance in the direction of that vessel which had already given us abundant food for distrust.

While we stood thus, my alarm and anxiety grew with every moment, as I recounted in my own mind all those harrowing tales of privateers and pirates, and other evil-disposed sea-rovers, which made the lives of seafaring folk at that period a continual menace. The captain, though plainly anxious, strove to put a good face upon the matter, declaring that no privateer, howsoever audacious, would venture to attack a vessel almost within hail of New York. But even as he spoke he was apprised by the lookout that some one was signaling from shore. We all made a forward movement to the ship's side, gazing in the direction indicated. Our young gentleman, Philip French, leveled a pair of powerful glasses, which, after having taken a look, he handed to me without a word. I beheld a figure outlined against the ragged sky, that had grown dark in the interim. The figure seemed disproportionately tall as it

danced to and fro, to and fro, waving a white cloth, and having so wild and uncanny an appearance that one was led to suspect a supernatural apparition. Our captain, however, understood, though in what manner I know not, that he was being warned against the strange vessel as a most dangerous privateer, which he must seek to avoid.

"I knew it for a Frenchman," burst forth an old salt, who was leaning over the rail, his weather-beaten countenance screwed up into innumerable wrinkles, and his bleared eyes gazing out over the water, "and that's what I sez, from the minit I clapped eyes on yonder craft."

"And," put in a younger man who swung in the shrouds beside him, "she is like enough now to send us to Davy Jones, or tow us after her for a prize." To which he added an oath which need not here be set down. I will confess that I trembled from head to foot as I overheard a remark that fitted in so precisely with my own surmises. Every countenance was overshadowed by the gravity of the hour, though Mr. French strove to keep up a light heart and to support my daughter's courage. As our captain and crew bent to the work of running us ashore, the strange ship, standing toward us at a moderate rate of speed, sud-

denly sent a shot which fell harmlessly into the brine, followed by a second that slightly grazed our side. It was evident that she strove rather to alarm than to injure us, since no doubt it was her hope to take *The Phœnix* intact as a prize.

Endeavoring to conceal my fears, I stood conversing with the two merchants, who were at no pains to hide their dismay. They openly bewailed the impending loss of their merchandise, having on board one hundred pipes of fine Canary brandy, fifty pipes of palm wine, a dozen bales of rich silk, and the like; and to their lamentations I made answer:

“Such losses, gentlemen, be indeed deplorable, but infinitely preferable to the loss of our lives or our personal liberty.”

I perceived at this juncture that Philip had left my daughter's side and stood in close colloquy with the captain. I strained my ears to catch the matter of their discourse, which was presently borne to me by a sharp gust of wind.

“There is but one course for you to pursue,” the young man was saying, “and that is to lower the ship's boat, so that the young lady and her father, with yonder gentlemen, may be carried ashore, if they be so minded. For myself, I will most readily

remain to abide by the ship's fortunes, and per-adventure, to render some assistance."

These latter words, as I could see, had reached my daughter, who became of a deadly pallor, with a nervous clasping of her hands. I felt of a sudden old and weary, so fully was it borne in upon me that those two young things thenceforward belonged to each other, and that I should but be the spectator whatsoever might betide.

The captain made some demur to these proposals, declaring that he could not leave the brigantine short-handed when a fight was imminent. But the younger man, strong-willed and of a temper that is most certain in all circumstances to dominate, finally prevailed. He represented that it was the master's first duty to place in safety those passengers who were intrusted to his care, and especially that one of the gentler sex who might be in the most imminent peril.

Meantime the situation grew each instant more alarming, the storm that had been hovering about the northeastern heavens crept momentarily nearer, and darkness was approaching. There was not an instant to be lost. The boat was lowered, and at the urgent insistence of my daughter, the elderly merchants were lowered first. She would

have had me descend next, but that I stoutly refused to stir from the deck until she was in safety. What a look was that which I beheld upon her face, and I likewise heard Philip's whispered words, as he held her hand, the which he only relinquished when she had descended several rungs of the ladder and was received by two stout mariners.

"At worst," he said, "our parting will be but for a brief space, Maid Marian."

To which the girl responded faintly:

"Pray Heaven that it may be so."

Once my daughter was seated in the boat I made ready to follow her, as both Philip and the captain insisted, and as for my child's sake appeared best. The descent was sufficiently perilous for one of my build and the waves rose angrily as the little craft tossed upon their crest. I cast a longing look backwards, toward where Philip stood beside the master. Sore was my heart, for I had learned to value the lad, and his courage and manly bearing would have been as a sheet anchor in the difficulties by which we were confronted. And, moreover, there was my daughter, who, I knew, was greatly perturbed for his safety. But the seamen who accompanied us had declared that the boat was

heavy enough in such a sea, since but two of them could be spared to convey us shorewards, and Philip had passed his word to remain and lend such assistance as he might to the captain.

The mariners set to their oars, and presently we were as a speck upon those angry waters, being propelled shorewards by all the strength of their sinewy arms. I caught a last glance, in the gathering darkness, of the gallant figure of Philip erect beside the captain, his curled periwig flowing in the breeze, and a smile upon his lips, as he waved his hat in farewell. My daughter, meanwhile, sat still as death, her face ashen pale, her eyes fixed upon the vanishing brigantine.

As for the merchants, they did but bewail the loss of their fine wines and rich silks, which would of a certainty go to enrich the coffers of the Frenchman, so that at length I was moved to reproach them with such manifest ingratitude to a watchful Providence who had saved us from a worse fate. And in truth we had presently ample cause for anxiety as to our bodily safety. Both wind and wave were against us, the light had all but faded from the sky, and the booming of the surge on the shore made us tremble for the possibility of reaching there. This however we did

through the mercy of God and the protection of His heavenly Mother, which my little girl did not cease to invoke for us and those left behind, from the time of our leaving the vessel. She even prevailed upon me to join with her in reciting aloud the prayers of the Rosary, despite the amazement of our companions and the seamen, who were of the Calvinistic persuasion.

* * * * *

It was many a day before we had tidings of the good ship *Phænix* or of those whom we had left therein. Rumors of many sorts in truth were plentiful, some averring that she had gone down with every soul on board, and others that after a desperate fight she, with her crew and the sole passenger, had been carried away as a prize by that most audacious privateer.

It was during this interval of suspense that I had reason to reflect upon the power of love when once it seizes upon the heart of man or maid. For my merry child, so lately singing and dancing down the garden paths of the conventual enclosure, was now pale and anxious-eyed. Quiet and demure in bearing, she spent hours upon the shore, gazing seawards as though she would have questioned the very gulls or the petrels, who, with

omens of storm on their white wings, came shorewards. It was pitiful to hear the poor child seeking from the ship-masters, or others concerned in navigation, every scrap of marine intelligence.

The family of Philip French had made prodigious efforts to discover his whereabouts, offering a prize for the intelligence, and making application to each ship-master who sailed into the bay. At last they received news that the young gentleman himself and Captain Stolton had been grievously wounded—a knowledge which I strove to keep from Marian until it was revealed to her by a meddlesome goodwife of our neighborhood—and that the ship with her crew had been dispatched to Martinico as prize to the French.

So the weeks wore on, until one dark night in mid-winter. It was vastly unpleasant weather, with sleet falling outside, and a chill within, and Marian took such poor comfort as she might from a blazing fire upon our capacious hearth. She sat upon a settle at one side thereof, to which she had drawn up her embroidery-frame. Her little fingers worked to and fro, and she sorted with rigorous care the bright colors of her silks. She roused herself likewise to converse, striving to conceal from me the lowness of her spirits and the agoniz-

ing fear which weighed upon her. While we sat thus the gun at the Fort caused Marian to start and shiver, telling of vessels that had arrived. Had it not been for my presence, I verily believe that despite the inclement weather she would have stolen forth, pursuing her inquiries. She sat still, however, with head lowered over her frame, and I perceived that the silks grew tangled and that she tugged at them nervously.

It was wearing late when the double knocker sounded. It was an unwonted hour, and our negro boy went to answer the summons with some apprehension, for the times were unsettled, evil-disposed persons had been observed about the town, and robberies had of late been frequent.

Marian stood up from her place at the fire, and before I could so much as speak she had slipped into the hall. The negro boy came back, with eyes rolling in their sockets, to apprise me that a tall man in a cloak stood without. Hastily seizing upon a blunderbuss which hung upon the wall, I hurried out, and there I beheld a tall man, in truth, holding Marian's two hands and gazing into her face. As I made a hasty movement forward I heard these words, and the tone in which they were uttered will never leave my memory.

"Maid Marian," the stranger murmured, "Maid Marian, Maid Marian!"

Just two words and no more, but they went to my heart, old and battered as it was. The stranger, whom I knew from that to be Philip, spoke as a famished man who beholds bread, or one perishing of thirst to whom water was vouchsafed. I stole away softly, but Marian did not for very long forget me. She came flying into the room and it was as though she had suddenly grown young and was a child again in the convent garden.

"Philip has come back!" she cried. "Philip has come back!"

And in another instant she was dragging the big figure into the room and planting him in a chair beside me. The hat and cloak were thrown aside, and there were the same honest eyes looking into mine, the same smile, and no change in the countenance save that it had grown pallid from a residence in unhealthy climates.

Well, we sat up half the night, there was so much to tell, nor did it seem as if we could ever get tired of asking questions and hearing what had befallen after we had left the ship. There had, in truth, been a fight, wherein Philip and the captain

had fallen wounded. The strange vessel, which had been standing to the northward, after our departure grew momentarily bolder. She sent shot after shot, so that presently the mainmast was sprung and there was a leak in the gunroom. The captain would not give up, however, and continued the struggle, though he had lost the topmast and the vessel was much shattered. Philip stood at his side throughout until he was disabled by a shot which carried him off his feet, and in another instant the captain's leg was gone. There was nothing for it then but to haul down the flag, the privateer sending a pinnace under the quarters and conveying the wounded men and the rest of the crew to the attacking vessel.

Philip had likewise to tell of his sojourn in Martinico and other outlandish places and all that transpired there. While his tongue talked his eyes likewise maintained another language with my little Marian, and I had to shut my own once or twice, or be taken with a fit of coughing, when the lad's hand sought hers, holding it close and warm.

Well, there were wedding-bells very soon after this event, and a merry-making that stirred up the good city of New York, at which assisted His Excellency, my Lord Cornbury, who was then the

Governor; the Lady Katherine, his wife, and other notables. But all that took place many long years ago, and my grandchildren, the young rascals, laugh when I forget that their father is no longer a boy, or that their comely and sedate mother was my little sprite, Maid Marian.

Down the Mill Road

BY RICHARD AUMERLE

FATHER MARVIN, pacing the twelve flags of the walk from rectory to church, was drinking in with the ears of the soul the whisperings of spring. Twenty measured, swinging paces, tuned to a nicety of distance, a turn on his heel, and twenty paces back; and at every swing and at every turn there came to nerve and sense the feeling of the birth of things, of life springing clean from the dirty earth; the twittering busyness of the sparrows, the smell of the leafing twig, the indefinable, breathing sense of newness, of life in the bud, of summer in the promise.

I do not say that he saw these things. He did not. But they were filling the darkness about him with a chastened, gray light; not a light of hope, just a steadying pillar of cloud that seemed to be going to serve for the years as they would come to him. Thus spring would come each year, bringing its lifting strength of rebirth out of the leveling blank of days that followed each other in senseless, mute succession.

A year ago now (a little more or less, what did it matter?) the shadow had fallen upon him. He had raced its slanting threat, as one races for the life of the body, trying to put the last words to that book which was to have been the full word of his life. The shadow had won the race. Gracefully the man had laid down the pen, when it was useless. The book lay upstairs now, stopped in the middle of a brave word. He could, without hesitation or groping at anything, make his way, with even, nicely measured steps, up to the place where it lay, and put his finger on the very place where he had given over the race. He did not often do so, though, because— It is not good to look back much, when one can not also look forward.

A few lingering, hard-dying hopes, maybe, had stayed with him after the shadow had fallen. For a long time a tracing of gray light would come to his eyes in the cool of the morning—that meant day—and after some hours of company it would depart—that was night. Sometimes it had seemed a comfort—more often it was a mock. It was almost a relief when a morning came and did not bring the shimmer. He had missed it, though, afterwards, a little.

That summer had fallen away into winter, and

in its going had left not even an incident of loss or gain by which to mark a point of time. Time is weary when one waits, counting hour by hour, the passing of a cloud, or even the coming of a sorrow. But when one has not even a loss to come to break the ceaseless, dumb round of clock hours, ticked off in meaningless, silly show, then it is not time but eternity through which one lives. For when one is young in strong blood, there is not even the end to be expected.

The winter had been like that.

Now the spring, cheeping in at the other windows of his soul, was telling of strength and purpose and will, and breathing the wine-spray of young life into his heart. Here was an incident, this miracle of nature's new vintage, that he had not looked for; and the lift of the head was braver, the stride was freer, as the detonation of it came from each flag—each an old friend now to his sensitized tread. The stride was longer, too, unconsciously; therefore the last of the twenty paces instead of leaving him in the center of the last flag—with room to turn freely—brought his foot with a thud against the church step. A cloud, too, with its sudden chill, passed before the sun. The old ache that had torn and gnawed his soul during

those months of darkness was upon him again. What did strength or a clear mind matter to a blind man! What were power and vigor and the joy of work to a man who could never put his hand to a thing of use! Into what place would these things fit! Whose need would they relieve!

He righted himself from the little stumble, and, turning, continued the pace. But, midway, it occurred to him that he had forgotten the count of his steps. Standing there in the middle of the wreck of things, it was not so much the thought of his own helplessness that struck him. Rather it was the feeling of utter uselessness, the reproach that he, who was by consecration a minister to the weak and the blind, should be so wholly without place or purpose.

Up one of the avenues of the church-yard, between the rows of the resting ones, there came a hurrying patter of small feet, the half-sobbing breath of some little body bent on an errand of great need. Father Marvin waited, held by the feeling of that need. Straight toward him it came, across the little box hedge that separated the dead from the living, across the little grass-plot between rectory and church. The man in the dark felt his left hand seized and found himself

being dragged away toward the graves. Only when it seemed to be assured that he was surely on the way did the little body, it was only a breath, a patter of feet and a tiny hand, so far, feel that any explanation was required:

“My mama wants you.”

It was plainly the voice of a little girl—maybe seven years old, maybe less. As the hurry of her feet had held him, so the panting voice and the tugging hand drew him, beyond the power of question. It did not occur to him that he might not go, any more than it did apparently to the child. He might have been waiting there for the summons from the very beginning of things, so inevitable did it seem that he should follow it.

The child was a stranger to the neighborhood, for he knew every child's voice as he had once known their faces. She certainly could hardly know of his blindness, even if she knew who he was at all. Yet she was leading him with all the care with which one would lead a blind man or a toddling infant.

Past the hedge at a place where there was a break in it, he did not stumble at all; then down one of the narrow paths through the habitat of the dead. The creaking of rusted iron, while she

halted for a moment and tugged at something, told him that they were at the lower gate of the cemetery. Now they were out in the Mill Road. He could feel under his feet the rounded slope of its side. They were going down the long hill to the creek. Here on the right was the old beach. Its gaunt outlines pressed themselves back upon his mind with a clearness that they had never possessed to the sight. The knotty old vines crawling up the rocks on the high side, where the road cut off the shoulder of the hill, were rousing themselves a little, and showing just a hint of buds. He could feel the delicate suggestion of green. Lower down the path trailed off the road into the wood behind the old mill. An old gray horse—he *knew* that it was gray, and old—cropping the old grass in the ditch stopped long enough to look at him. He could feel the look. They were on the level at the foot of the hill now. The old mill passed sedately by, peering somewhat curiously into his mind from its broken, vacant windows. The creek was at its old spring babble of vagabond happiness. And beneath it all there was the force tugging at his hand, leading him whithersoever it would.

It was not in any way a spirit of adventure that led him to follow without the slightest question or

hesitancy. The conviction of some one's need for him, of a demand that he could not evade, laid itself upon his mind and hurried him along with steady, sure step in the wake of his conductor. They were across the bridge now, and he was wondering whether they would take the lower road down the creek or turn to the left over toward the Stone Row. This latter was a dozen or so of stone houses built into a continuous block. It had been constructed in the times when the mill was busy enough to give a living to many who had lived in comfort in these houses. Now, when the mill stood idle, they were falling into their decay in that half-dignified way that stone houses have of going down hill. The character of the dwellers, too, had changed from the thrift of steady, independent labor, to the haphazard, hand-to-mouth strays of the community.

Their way was to the left, toward the houses. Father Marvin followed the little hand so implicitly that now when the turn had been made he wondered at himself that he had thought that they might, by any possibility, have taken the other turn. Of course they had been coming in just this direction from the very beginning of everything.

He felt himself coming up the rise of ground in

front of the houses, which had once called itself a terrace. He could feel the houses as he passed the first of them; the staring women in the doorways, wondering how the blind man got along so well. They must have been about in the middle of the block, when he felt the child drawing him up toward the houses, and then heard a little foot placed on the low wooden step. He made for the step himself and reached it with easy sureness. Up the four or five steps to the floor level, and then along a passage to the back. He could feel the dark dankness here, and he was glad when the little body turned to what proved to be the stairs. The stairs were difficult, winding almost in a complete circle, no two of them were cut at the same angle; he did not remember any stairs like them, yet he felt that he ought to have known that this was the way they would be. It was absolutely essential to the whole matter that they should be just so. The whole feeling in which he had followed so far was no more a matter of reason than it was one of caprice. It was an elemental impulse, absolutely simple, resting on the first necessity.

The stairway opened up, as though by inevitable law, into a shaded attic. The half darkness of the

place, forcibly perceptible, was in no way a matter of light or shade. It was the somberness of a pervading, brooding spirit that claimed the place for its own. From over on one side, whence the darkness itself seemed to issue forth, there came a voice awed and toned by a Presence that was not of this world.

“Who is it?”

Then, as the little hand still dragging at his brought him across the room, his foot touched a chair and he sat down. There must have been more light here, for in a moment the voice came again.

“Oh, it is Father Marvin, I think. Why did you come?”

“Why, the little girl— Did you not send?” And when it was said he knew of course that he had not been sent for in any way which men think of as usual.

“It was Dadie, then. I did not hear her come up with you. No, I did not send her, but I guess she is right, after all. She often is.”

“She must have known,” the voice went on after a little pause, “that I wanted you, though I did not know it myself until you came. I was just beginning to die.”

The words were so simply true, in the very essence of truth as it can be spoken only in the presence of the real things of this life and the other, that it did not occur to him that there was any possible question. He merely waited. Then breaking the spell of the pause, he asked:

“And is there no one who should know?”

“There is only Dadie, and she will know too soon.”

“But is there no friend, no woman?”

“No, there is no—woman.”

Again the pause, and it was the voice of a mother of earth breaking it:

“There is only Dadie, and there in the bureau you will find instructions about her. You will not touch them, please, until—afterwards. I have been waiting, thinking to send for—for some one. The time is too short now, and you have come. It is better, maybe, that it should be so. There is nothing now that I have to do, except——”

Again the pause was there to be filled in. And as the thought of the Presence, which completed her words, came crowding back upon his mind he knew that she was right. There was nothing left for her “except——” He wondered what was his place and purpose here in the Presence. It was

something deeper than the receiving of her message concerning the child. Another could have gone between in that. This was a matter of themselves and this fact that was here with them. The voice filled out his thought:

“Yes, Dadie was right, though only Death, who is coming to me, could tell how she knew. . . .

“I am afraid to die. It is not God, so much, that I fear, for He has loved me, in the face of all; nor is it Death himself. It is the dark that makes me a coward. I have always feared the dark. And the light, I have loved it so well—too well.

“Now you know how Dadie told you the truth, for truth has so many ways of being true. It was my fear, crying out through the little one that I have borne, which brought her to you with the word.

“You must come with me. You know nothing of me, and it is as well, for now. But I have known of you. You have faced the dark. You have to make your own way through it. You know the paths. For you, who walk with a sure step in its windings, it is not too much that I should ask you to lead me a little on the way. You will be with me to the end—of this path. Even in the dark you will be seeing the things that

I must see, as no other one could. And even though you can come only a little of the way, yet I think you have already seen the worst of the dark. You can come with me through that, and from there—maybe there will be a little light from the other side.”

It was not so hard, now, to see the purpose which was his in the errand that he had come. Of course, it was as it must have been—all a part of the primal intention. The ways of the dark he knew, indeed. That they were not the ways of this darkness into which this soul was going, that did not enter. The soul would take its own strength, in its own way, from the feeling of his nearness. Who was he, to say what was true or what mistaken in this?

“It is coming now, or I am slipping away into the very worst of it. I am afraid. You are near, are you not? You will not leave me?”

“I am near. I will not leave you, until——”

“Oh, it is worse now, so much worse.”

“It is very dark, yes; but the path is straight.”

“Tell me, have you come this far before? Is the dark worse even than this?”

“Yes, it is worse, sometimes, even than this. But——”

"It is, it is worse now . . . worse than the dark could ever be on this side . . . I am afraid. . . . Are you with me still? . . . I do not know if it is worse now. Maybe the light will come soon. . . . There is a little now. . . . Am I sure? Do you see it? Is it the light?"

"Yes," the man murmured, "you are sure. It is the light."

"It is light. . . . Yes, I am sure. Come, Dadie, and——"

And now it was the man who prayed and pleaded, that he might see and go farther into the light.

But he was alone, with the Presence.

When it was very dark he rose and touched gently the two hands, clasped just a little rigidly over the breast, and made his way very softly down the stairs. On the steps, outside, Mrs. Mullen was cuddling "Dadie" to her. Plainly, they were waiting for something.

"I was on the point of going up," the woman said, "when I saw you coming with Dadie, Father. Is the poor one above suffering much?"

"No, she is not suffering any more."

And the woman, in understanding, only cuddled closer the little body that she held.

On the bridge the man stopped to think it out, if there were anything to be thought out. There was nothing, for the answer had all been written in the elements of life and death. Which was light and which was shade, he could not read. So, closing the book and keeping to the side slope of the road, he went slowly up the hill.

The Ghost of Light

BY RICHARD AUMERLE

MOST of his friends had long ago given up writing, supposing that in the dark letters could be nothing to him. They knew nothing of the craving and hunger of the man for even such impalpable nearness of companionship as a letter brings. This letter, beyond any which Father Marvin had received since that midnight when blindness had fallen upon him, brought with it the breath and stir of things. Even under his assistant's hesitating reading of John Kyle's wonderful scrawl, Father Marvin could feel the pulse of life, of strength, of sureness which had been Kyle's mark since they two had hammered together at Latin verbs and opposing football lines. He had not seen Kyle since nearly four years back, when he had taken in Vienna on his way home from Rome. There he had found him delving at the roots of things in optics, and disputing with the doctors generally; incidentally, too, hammering out a place and a name for himself, in a city where his

countrymen more often got names for a very different kind of delving into things.

Now John was coming back to settle himself to his life-work. His letter was full of his plans, and of the swing and mettle of a strong man's life. Then at the end there was a line or two to say that he would be pretty well battered out when he would get home, and might he put up for a few weeks with Father Marvin and loaf around and get rested a little? It was not a particularly clever ruse, coming as it did from a man who had never been tired, to say nothing of deliberately resting even if he were tired. But it was kind, of the real kindness that blunders out from one man to another. Not a word of sympathy, nor a mention of Father Marvin's blindness. That was ignored as though it had not been, for Kyle certainly knew of it, and Father Marvin, with the intuition of the darkness, knew that he was simply giving a month of the most valuable time of his life to come and sit in the dark with a blind man and talk old battles over. He went down into the crispy sunlight of the early autumn day to measure those twelve flags of his walk, from rectory to church, and somehow the twenty paces seemed longer, and the turn on one's heel and the twenty paces back

were straighter and truer from the whiff and breath of living in those words which John Kyle had said, and still more in those which he had not said.

John Kyle's grip, as his old friend met him at the door two weeks later, was of the kind that tells of cleanness, of old love, of perfect understanding, man to man, the kind that needs no words. The two had entered the same "prep" school on the same day, and had left the same college with their degrees seven years after. During four of those years they had slept in opposite corners of the same room: there was little need for talk. The sense of nearness, of communing, of the fixing of old lines of thought, these were all that either cared for.

The long gray evening in the library, with the cigar which Father Marvin smoked, not because a cigar has any taste in the dark, but just because two cigars are better than one to talk over, was the time for the muster lists; the calling of the old names, and the tracing of each to his present. All that had really belonged to the old crowd could be followed except two. Those two had merely dropped out, as men have the habit of doing. The others were answering somewhere in the roll of

life, some loudly, others only with a nod, all except poor Martin, he who had beaten them all in logic and who could hold the college cook in heated argument while he stole the very meat cooking in the pan; he had found a quiet grave down at El Caney. Delavan, who had once held two freshmen locked in the cupola for three days, was now at the head of the old place, and was said to be a dread to all hazers. Dillon, their football captain, was already a marked leader in his diocese and was on the way to a bishopric, "Lord have mercy on him." So the talk sifted and cleared and eddied down till only they two were left, and each man really talked of himself while he named others. Kyle saw that Father Marvin was ready to talk openly, that it would do him no harm, and he gave him the word, as casually as he could:

"And with yourself, old man; how does it go? I don't need to ask what kind of a fight you're making."

"Oh, it's pretty much as you would expect, John. The days are a trifle long sometimes, and the nights are—a trifle longer. But no, it's not altogether as bad as it looks. I haven't gotten to whittling or playing peg solitaire yet. I have a good evening now and then with the books. I

know most of them by their backs, and though the lady of the dust-brush does insist upon a new arrangement of them every time she cleans here, still it makes for interest to trace them around and see what strange bedfellows she herds together at times. The other day I found a flippant-acting volume from the University of Chicago shouldering up to St. Thomas' *Summa*, and old Jeremy Taylor was browbeating a pretty little book of verse by Genevieve Cooney. Then it is good, too, to have an old friend of a book on your knee and trace what you can remember of it. Of course, it gets a little annoying at times when a fellow feels that he remembers less each day. If I could only see a little of my breviary or of old Montaigne—but don't mind me, John. It's all right as it is."

From depths to shallows and back again to depths Father Marvin talked, with little breaks and pauses of understanding here and there, thinking aloud thoughts which he had hardly as yet dared to think to himself. And Kyle, listening for the first note of self-pity or weakness or of hardening, saw the clear boy-spirit of the chum of his youth shining out in the strength and fine force of this man, who, without bravado, but in gentleness and simple truth, was carrying the most

terrible affliction of civilization with a smile and a gentle quip at himself. Here surely was one of the things of God, and it should stand as it was.

* * * * *

Dalton had ever been the unfortunate of the old crowd. He, in utter honesty, but in blundering zeal, could put his foot into the cleverest scheme that ever sophomores devised for the proper education of freshmen or for the enlightenment of an obtuse faculty. Accordingly it seemed necessary that he should drop out from the city one evening, a day or so after Kyle's coming.

Kyle perspired through the dinner, doing his mortal best to shoulder off Dalton's awkward sympathy and raw questions from the defenseless man in the dark. He succeeded after a fashion, as a man could, but when, after dinner, Father Marvin asked him to go in and write a long-neglected note, he went with fear and trembling.

His presentiment was a true one; for, coming back through the long hall, he was horrified to hear Dalton's voice raised in a full blast of exultant blundering:

"Why, sure, though it's like John not to have told you of it. Why, Kyle is to-day the greatest name in optics in the world. His new Catho-

ranoid treatment of decay of the optic," the words remained stuccoed on the air, for John was standing over him with the light of sudden death in his eyes. That was all. John bravely gathered things together with a swift question about the man to whom the note was directed, and the bad place was past, for the time.

The mischief was done, though, far past the help of Dalton's honest contrition, as he expressed it to John, on the way down to the car. The thing was there, between the two friends, as they sat the quiet hour before bedtime. It made itself subtly felt in their "good night," for neither thought that the other would have a good night. It was there, too, for John, in the morning, while he knelt to serve Mass, which Father Marvin had learned to say by heart. Kneeling there, listening to the sacred words of prayer and faith and sacrifice, the breathing of the soul and spirit of his friend to his God, there came over him again the conviction of the first evening, that this was of the things of God. Yet, too, there came the sickening self-knowledge that he could not refuse the trial to his friend. And there was little light.

For three days the word stood unspoken between them, eating out of the dish with them, walking,

step for step, with them in their silent marches up and down the lane, sitting by each man's bed through the night. John was silent, for, on the way from the steamer, he had taken care to look up the man who had last treated Father Marvin, and from him he had learned how little chance, if any, there was of help for his friend. One chance in a thousand, maybe, he had stood, under the old treatment. In his own discovery John had all the confidence and enthusiasm of the man who has found a thing; but he knew, with awful surety, where its bounds lay. Not for nothing had he seen men walk into his office, straight in newfound hope in him—and stagger out, broken under the shadow. He might reduce it to one chance in a hundred, possibly to one in fifty; no more. But deeper than any thought of professional failure there lay the picture of his friend's life, the sure inner peace, the silent reaches and moorings which he was making in the life of another world, the nearness to God and the spiritual fitting of thought and heart to the soul-life. And all these things which had taken months to grow out of the very heartburnings of a strong man, these must be destroyed for the barest chance of sunlight.

Father Marvin knew, too, the things which John

was weighing: knew, from John's silence, that the hope of anything was of the slightest; for if there were even a common chance of anything, John Kyle would be the one eager to give his best. He knew, too, the sacrifice he must make of the things which had been his life through these months. But it is not easy to weigh things with a steady hand in the dark; with the dark, itself, in its awful loneliness, beating at the very soul. The strong, full throb of earth-life was awake and pulsing through his veins. The vigor, even, of John Kyle's companionship, of the work that was his; the counting of the names of the others that had started with them, the work they were doing, fine, big work; the battles, the victories, the very defeats, that they were getting out of life; and in himself—the thought of a work dropped at its first step, a life withering, unlived; and beside it, hope springing young out of the darkness, a life yet to be lived, a work yet to be done; the manuscript, stopped at the word where the light had left him, he could put his hand on the place! Just for a year or two of light, a month or two, even! Surely it was not too much!

So, with the one thought lying under their talk and their silences, John Kyle understood when, as

they were breaking up for the night of the third day since Dalton's speech, his friend laid a pleading hand upon his shoulder to say, "Give me my chance, John, it's mine," and went quietly up to his room without his answer.

To John, sitting late into the night over his problem, the pity, the cruelty, the folly, almost, of the thing, was plain. But on the other side there was the writing, that what a man can do that he must do in the crisis. And more than that, it was Marvin, the man he loved above all others on earth, who was asking, pleading for it, and John knew that he would have it, let reason and judgment be what they would. He had gotten no farther than that when he had passed up to his room and had listened far into the night to the quiet, even pacing of the lonely man in the room across the hall.

They were treading the flags, from rectory to church, in the hour after breakfast. John did not know that here, in these twenty paces, Father Marvin had already fought the battles of one life; but he felt the pressing silence of the man at his side, and knew that he must speak.

"I don't need to ask whether you have thought this thing over," he began just where he happened

to be in his thoughts. "You know my judgment is against it, I guess."

"I have realized that, of course, John, but after all, is it so much a matter of judgment? I don't think I shall have to plead with you—I'm hardly asking more than the common chance that you give to every man that comes to you."

"You are right, it is only that; and it isn't much for you to ask. I know, 'Bun,' " it was the old boy name slipping out now, "or rather, I don't know, nor does any one else, what it must mean to you. Too, if any one is to try it, I guess you would rather have me."

"You know that. I said I was not asking more than the common chance which you give to every man. That is not true. I'm asking a great deal more; for if it were not you, just you, I could not face the thing again. So I'm deliberately drawing you into it, to have you bear it out with me, to make you suffer with me, if there is to be suffering. Of course, it is a thing no right-minded——"

"Of course there is no more to be said," broke in John. "When will you feel ready?"

"To-morrow, if you can, John."

And John, taking the path down to the car for the city, left him standing in the sunlight at the church door.

Returning rather late that evening with the things which he would immediately need, John found a new light between them.

Father Marvin's laugh was as clear and true as it had been ten years ago. Their talk was steady, running on this and that. It was not the buoyancy of new-sprung hope between them, for the knowledge of the ordeal and the slender chance was there as ever. But the thing that had been between them, on the mind of each, these days past, was gone. And in its place there was the feeling that there was a terrible thing to be met, but they were to meet it together. Through it each man could place his hand on a shoulder where for fifteen years that hand had loved to rest. And between them there rested a great peace.

The morning light in the library was good, and with his old friends, the books, lending down their bit of cheer from their shelves, and the familiar chairs and settings elbowing around in a friendly, protecting way, Father Marvin sat down for the first test.

There was not a great deal for John to learn.

The other man's reading had been substantially correct. The decay of the optic nerve had progressed to a point where, under the old method, nothing short of a miracle would have availed to have given it life. Whether it had gone far in the last few months or not, he could not be certain. But the effects of the last horrid probing stood there, a grim, terrible warning.

For the unasked question he had but the one thing to say. "There is nothing, old man, but what we knew yesterday. Neither worse nor better."

It was just the clearing up of the foolish, never-dying human hope, that there might be *something*; and its effect was to settle each man down to the bare, steady chance that knowledge and skill could give.

The result of a deeper and more searching test, on the next day, was the proof that the original trouble had not been disease, but pure strain. It was not much, but it left the fact that there might still be a measure of strength and health in the nerve if it could be roused to life.

Debating whether he should give this much of hope, which might, after all, be false, John looked into the steady, questioning face of his friend and

saw that it was his right to know. As he had said, the chance and all that went with it was his own.

John decided to give the nerve a week of rest, as much, maybe, to give his friend time to brace himself. as for any real physical need that there was. For the nerve was as it was, and no matter of time or rest would make any telling difference. Everything, indeed, that was to be said had been covered in the few sentences that had passed between them on the matter. But John felt that Father Marvin would be the better of a few days to get himself fixed to new bearings, to get used to having in his mind thoughts to which he had been a stranger for months.

The hour close to midnight John had taken for the ordeal, for he had often noticed that his own nerves were then most finely tuned for sensitive work. It was better, too, for the reason that it was not easy to shut out the daylight entirely from the library. Father Marvin had stolen quietly in from the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and had taken his place in the accustomed chair without a word. Night and day had long ceased to be much more than words to him, and the hour mattered little. In fact, there seemed an element of

fitness in it, that this trial should be made over the hour in which the light had left him.

The little clock over the fireplace seemed the only link to the reality of things, ticking, stepping off measures of time that seemed to lengthen and hesitate in the passing of the tense moments. Weirdly into the ticking there mingled the searching whirr of the battery, and out of the black, little tongues of heavy *infra-red* crawled and twisted themselves and writhed around the two little poles. Back of these, out of the heavier gloom, the spitting fluorescence of the cathode rays blinked and shivered and paled, and then, in the full of the turning current, flared out into the glow of an unearthly noon, throwing vindictive shadows of the other crawling flames upon the wall and painting strange shapes of light and shade over the face, even into the open, unseeing eyes of the man sitting there, unconscious of it all.

“Steady now for a while, ‘Bun,’ and don’t move if you can help. It’s going to be a little hot, but I’m not going to touch you at all.”

Just a little tightening of the muscles, as the white heat-light moves up. The two rays split and fork into each other, sputtering now to full red, breaking now to the dull orange, twisting into

streaks of yellowish green, and purpling finally down into the deadly *ultra-violet*; splashing the faces of the two silent men, the dead black of the Mission chairs, the white face of the ticking clock, into the one hue of dark blood red.

To the keyed sensitiveness of the man in the chair, the heat of the nearing rays came almost as a relief. It was something tangible. Now it came closer, and was a thrilling, searching pain, on which he could set his teeth; closer, now it was a leaping, twisting drill, into the very corners of his brain; closer, now it gathered itself into a ball of whirring, white fire, careening mad through the places of his mind, shooting off from itself myriads of stinging white darts of pain, sweeping back and forth through the spaces of his consciousness, gathering to itself every anguish of his life—the horrid dreams of childhood, his mother's coffin, the sufferings of a motherless boyhood, the agonies of the months of creeping darkness, these, and others, strange, crawling terrors, of which he could never even have dreamed, the ball of white pain was gathering and rolling across his very soul, in searing, zigzag paths of shriveling light. In the full *gamut* of its wild horror, now, it steadied itself to a single point of piercing white, now

widening out a little, and softening. Slowly it seemed to be shading itself out. Was it going, and was this the end? No! For it toned gently into a kindly orange glow—and stayed!

“How, old man?” It was John’s good, steady-
ing voice breaking in. “Do you see anything?”

“Do you me— Is that light? Don’t speak till you’re sure. I thought it was only the nerve burning.”

“That is light.”

The only response was a little gathering of the man into himself, to meet this and arrange it, as he had met all the rest.

“How much will it be, John?”

“Enough to get around, and put almost a sure foot under you again. I’m afraid that’s all, ‘Bun’!”

It took a little while of silence to meet this—and arrange it.

“Is that all—absolutely all? Isn’t there a chance to work?”

“There is none—in reason.”

“And out of reason?” he probed on blindly, pleading.

“There is *one*, ‘Bun,’ but, in the name of all that we have been to each other, don’t ask it.”

"That is strong, John, and you are right, of course. But I thought we had settled that."

"Yes, but you don't, you can't see it as it is. Won't you see that it will, in human probability, mean utter blackness to the end?"

"At the worst, it will be for me only the laying of a ghost, and, again, it is my chance. Let me have it."

Again he sat back and steadied himself. And John, protesting in heart and mind at what he felt an outrage, moved the glaring cross-flare.

Again, the withering white sear; again, the hurrying ghosts of undreamed horrors; the driven sparks of pain shooting down into the very blood of his veins; his mind whirled, clear of his body, going out and up, in seething circles of glare, onward, with the rush of the whirlwinds of doom, tearing toward a mighty sea of all-engulfing white!

Then it was dark.

He could feel the foolish little cross-rays singeing his eyebrows. But there was no pain within. The nerve was dead. It was the end. And John, seeing the look that settled over the other man's face, silently reached for the switch.

In the dark, the sober little clock ticked off the

few remaining seconds of the day, and as soberly told the twelve strokes of the hour. When it had finished, Father Marvin rose, and, taking John by the arm, led the way in silence down the stairs and out into the moonlight of the middle night, across the twelve flags, from rectory to church, stopping at the door to whisper:

“It is only a ghost laid, John; we will leave it to rest with Him who is within, here.”

The Mist

BY RICHARD AUMERLE

A DULL, misty, lowering day, especially if it comes in the long slant of winter, when the soul is already a-weary with the drear of the lingering, whitened death of the year, is one of the things which takes the heart out of life. It is much the same whether one can see the outer aspect of sky and earth with the eyes of the body or not. The sense of blankness, of hope dead, of desolation, is a matter of the soul, rather than of the physical sight. Father Marvin was having this borne in upon him this morning with a little more than its usual weight. A library, with two full windows facing respectively north and east and sweeping a half circle of lovely country, should, beyond doubt, be a pleasant room. Let it then have a cheery rug or two, four or five green-leathered chairs, with a Mission table, as a sort of crown piece; and let the books lining the walls on the two clear sides and stacked up between the windows be, every one of them, an old and trusted friend. This, surely,

is a place where one might defy the dreariest day.

When, however, that library comes to mark the confines of one's daily life through long months, which have nothing at the end of them; when a book, no matter how long-standing a friend it may be, comes to be known from its fellows only by the shape and feeling of its back; when every friendly looking chair becomes a stumbling-block of sorry humiliation; add to these the mist, sweeping indefinably in from outside, with its clammy suggestion of ghost-wraiths; and the library may not be altogether a place of joy.

Months had followed each other in gray, senseless succession, since that midnight when the last hope of seeing a light of this earth had left him. His books had stayed with him more steadfastly than any other thing. But this morning, whether it was the mist, or merely the telling of the long confinement, he had been pressed by the fear that he was losing his hold on them, too. With a diffident, fevered touch, he was going over the lines of them, fingering the lettering and the tracings on the back of each. The dread would crowd strong upon him as he would come upon one, now and then, that was non-committal, in the smoothness

of its back; and he would be forced to take it down and try the paper for marks of memory. Even that would fail with some, and he would be forced to go back in humiliation and count the books in the line. This, though, was not the worst, for often, as he opened a book, and a well-used, softened page would bring the passage into mind, he would find himself stumbling over places where always before they would swing clear and true to his memory. Probably he knew that it was only his own nervous consciousness of himself that made his mind waver. But the knowledge did not seem to help much. Moving along the middle row, his fingers came upon the old school copy of Faber's Hymns. Here surely was a touch of friendliness. Fingering, with the delicate sensitized touch of the dark, he turned the page to the lines headed "The Thought of God." Smoothly the lines came through his mind, in a clear, steady flow:

"'Tis like that soft invading light
Which in all darkness shines—shines—darkness
shines—"

Suddenly the verse broke off, and his memory went trailing off after stray threads, only to be brought back by a dead sense of loss and defeat.

Not only did those lines seem to be slipping from him, but more than all, the sureness of the fine memory which had kept these months full, was gone.

The insistent "brr-brr" of the door-bell brought the reality of things back to him, and he wondered why it was not being answered. Finally the hope of adventure led him to make his way down the long hall to the door himself. There are so many possibilities in the ringing of the door-bell, to one in the dark.

"And this is the welcome I get, Parrain, when I've come out all the way from the city in this awful day to see you? Why, I've nearly pulled the poor bell out of place, trying to waken some one in this old house of yours."

It was Betty, Father Marvin's niece, who, in addition to ruling the life and establishment of her father in town, was accustomed to make occasional descents upon the rectory and disturb in general the tenor of ways there.

"Sorry, Betty, but I guess no one else heard the bell, and you know I'm not the regular attendant. Tell me, though, what whisperer told you that I needed you this morning, above all other mornings?"

"Well, maybe you can find something to scold me about. That helps, doesn't it?"

"Immensely. You came without your rubbers, of course."

"No, honest, Parrain, I kicked them off outside your door, when I was waiting to be let in."

"Sure it wasn't in the train?"

"No, because I didn't put them on till I was in the train." This in triumph.

"That sounds—convincing; but let it pass. I can lend you mine when you're going home, anyway."

Her silent scorn of this proposal was sufficient to seat them both quietly, each in a comfortable green-leathered chair on either side of the library table.

"Well, whenever you're ready, of course?" Father Marvin ventured.

"Ready?"

"Naturally; to tell me what brought you out this morning."

"Oh, it wasn't much—that is—certainly. I just came out to see how you were."

"I am still waiting."

"Well, then, I just wanted to ask a question."

"You might have 'phoned, you know."

"Oh, it isn't that kind of a question. I'd have to see you when you were answering it."

"I think I know the kind."

"Now, if you're going to say funny things, I'm sorry I came."

"Please go on, Betty; I'm all reverent attention."

"Parrain——"

"Yes?"

"Do you think—is it right— Can a fellow be engaged to two men at once?"

"Two—!" Father Marvin groaned. The last time he had seen Betty she had been in a blue frock, taking ship to a Paris convent.

"Please, Parrain, it's worse than you think."

"Pardon me, girly, I wasn't laughing, really. Maybe, if you'd tell me——"

"That's what I'm going to do. But it isn't so easy as I thought it would be."

"Where did it begin? Perhaps it will be easier that way."

"Oh, it began with Frank Stanton, a long time ago. But he isn't the trouble. He's— Let me begin my own way. I had it all said over, on the train; but I guess I've forgotten how it went.

"You see, Frank has always been at hand. I

can't remember a time when I didn't know him and fight with him. You know, when I was little, after poor mama was gone, his mother used to take me to the country with them. We got engaged."

"I see; propinquity, and so forth. Would it be any harm to ask how old you were?"

"I was ten, and he was eleven, past."

"Um— Romantic age! How did it happen?"

"I hit him with a piece of plank."

"Rather a crude method, don't you think? But, of course, youth is inclined to bluntness. Was there no other way to get him to propose?"

"You're irreverent. We were climbing trees, and there was one that I tried and tried on, and couldn't get up. Then he came over from his tree and climbed mine right before me. I was furious at him, and bit my lips to keep back the tears. But when he came down and politely offered to give me a boost up, it was the last straw. I grabbed the nearest thing, a good-sized piece of lumber, and struck him over the head with all my might. He turned white, and looked queerly at me for a moment; then he made one rush and caught me and kissed me till I cried. And—that was how.

"That has been the way always, since. Oh, I don't mean literally that way. He does not dare now, of course. But always I have teased him and hurt him, and always he stands it to a certain point, and when I have been unusually mean I see that look coming into his eyes and I temporize."

"Maybe if he'd wear that look all the time," Father Marvin was ready with the suggestion.

"And that is just Frank always. He is so *sure*. No matter what, or how, he will always do the right thing at the moment it should be done. He is ever so terribly right that he tantalizes me—sometimes. You know, I would rather do the wrong thing at the right time and then make it up."

"Yes, but then not many people have your *way* of 'making up.' And, at least, it would be embarrassing to have him do the wrong thing."

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I would like him to do something that I could be really angry about. It wouldn't seem so hard to live up to him. Why, sometimes, when he is not near at all, and I am having a bad day, with servants and things, and I just feel that everything is slipping and I'm going into a hateful temper, his face comes up to

me, with that big, protecting, warning look, and I just stop and cry. Sometimes, I'm afraid, I half wish him to be as masterful as he was that other time."

"But about the other man. What did you hit *him* with?" Her uncle was politely interested.

"Oh, he's different. In fact, that's what it is, I think. He's so different from everything and everybody that I've ever been accustomed to. He makes you think something new every time you see him or hear him speak. I saw him first standing at the rail of the vessel at Cherbourg, talking to Isabelle Trainer, and I thought then that he was the most interesting man I had ever seen. He was crossing with them, Isabelle and her sister and mother. I suppose, maybe, nothing would have happened, only Isabelle was hateful. She put on her air of looking away over my head, and when she introduced Marsh—you know who he is, the man who did those wonderful Tuscan etchings—why, she was particular to let him know that I was just free from my books. I was furious—and, Parrain . . . I know it was wrong, I just set myself to be nice to him."

"He would have had more chance under the

‘plank’ method, I would say.” Father Marvin seemed to weigh the odds, for and against the quarry.

“Truly, honest, Parrain, I didn’t do anything to attract him. But he has such a way of looking at you, and seeming to be putting things around you, and separating you from everybody else, and forcing you to think that there is something between you and him. The second day out he spent most of the time with me on deck, and Isabelle discovered suddenly that she was ‘a poor sailor.’ She passed the remainder of the voyage in her stateroom.

“Marsh was the best company I ever saw. It was not so much what he said, though he did talk brilliantly; it was more the way he had of understanding, of meeting your thought half way. He seemed to be back of your mind, prompting and bringing out your best things, and then turning them over for you until you were really surprised to see how good they were.

“That wasn’t all, though. The third night on board I had just gotten to my stateroom, after an evening on deck with Marsh, when Mrs. Trainer came in to talk to me, in a motherly sort of way. She didn’t say that, of course, but it was easy to

see that something was coming. She was solicitous in a brooding, clucking manner, and wondered if it was good to sit so late in the spray. Before I knew how she got to it she was talking of Marsh. He was such a charming man. He must be wonderful to a little girl like me, who had not yet met men of his world. I agreed indifferently, that he made good company for a tiresome voyage. Even that did not seem to be enough, though, for her conscience. She remembered that I was at least a half-orphan. She wondered if any one had ever told me anything about Marsh. I replied quietly that there was hardly any need for that, since I had met him with her party. Oh, of course, she had not meant anything of that sort. How could I have understood her that way? Indeed, Mr. Marsh was really the most desirable sort of man, family, position, talent, money—she chanted it like a charm. That wasn't what she had meant at all. Well, in fact, it was a little difficult to say just what she did mean. I ought, though, to keep in mind that he was a good deal older than I. At this I was innocently puzzled, confessed that I did not quite follow her, and would she please be more explicit? It should seem that his age would make him all the more a proper person to talk to.

I was careful to insist that I had always been taught to respect age.

“Somehow, I guess she thought that I was getting the best of it, and she came out with what she really had to say. The sum of it was that Marsh was a man whom women generally liked, and that this had made him a little bit too ready to try his success in various quarters. Especially, and here was her sting, he liked to try his charm of manner on naïve young girls. There had been rumors of his engagement many times, but they had invariably proven premature. Even now there was something between him and Isabelle. Of course she could not say that there was anything definite. But I would be able to understand how unfortunate it would be for me, in my very first season, and so forth, she drifted off into vagueness. . . . But that was the implication: that he was amusing himself with my newness. Also, which was the real trouble, that I was interfering with certain plans of her own for Isabelle. I thanked her as prettily as I knew how, for her kindly interest, and promised that I would remember—above all things, I would remember. I did remember. Before we saw Sandy Hook he had proposed, and made no secret of it. And had been accepted.

“Please don’t jibe, Parrain, or I *will* cry in earnest. I couldn’t help it, honest, Parrain. I had my revenge on him, and Mrs. Trainer. But it was too big for me. He fairly swept me off my feet. He was so subtle and so perfect in his understanding of things. I never knew how to face him, or to turn him back from any direction that things had taken.”

“The soft-wood method was the more—satisfactory, after all,” Father Marvin moralized reminiscently. The interruption merely gave a rest-pause.

“Frank was at the dock waiting for me, and the sight of his face fitting into the old restful things that I knew meant home and everything that I really cared for made me hurry off with him, almost without a word to Marsh. We left him standing on the dock, looking as though he wanted to follow us and demand explanations. Frank asked who he was, and I told him that he was some one I met with the Trainers. I was so frightened that I couldn’t say anything else.

“The next week he came over to Philadelphia, and he was just fine—Marsh, I mean. Didn’t remember about the dock at all; took everything for granted. And by the time we had talked for an

hour he had gotten to the point where he was insisting upon making the engagement public, and I had to beg, Parrain, *beg* for just a little more time. I had to tell daddy then. He wanted to be angry at first; but then I cried, and he got sensible and said that they were both ninnies, or worse, to be bothering his little girl. That was sweet of daddy, wasn't it? But it didn't help much, for he didn't understand, you know."

"And am I, then, thought to be learned in these matters?"

"Yes, you will know, Parrain. You always know."

"Would it be any breach of trust, then, to ask what I am expected to know in this case?"

"Why don't you see, Parrain, I've 'fessed, and you are to tell me what I will do."

"What you *will* do! That's a little too much, Betty, for any man person."

"Well, what I must do, then. It has to come to that, doesn't it?"

"It does come to that, girlie, somewhere, always."

"Then, what is it, Parrain, dear? I'll do it, truly."

"Betty——"

"Yes, Parrain?"

"I can't get that plank out of my mind. Suppose you were to hit Marsh with it?"

"Wait, Parrain—let me see what you mean. Oh, yes; I think I see. If I were to be just myself, to him, in my every-day faults, and tantrums, sometimes. Is that it, Parrain?"

"It has to be that in the end, Betty."

"And would he *make* me be good as Frank does? No, he'd be stand-offish, and he'd wonder at me, and I'd go away and pout alone. You're right, Parrain. I'll go straight home and write to Marsh, while I have the courage. A nice, kind letter—the poor man."

"You are not forgetting Frank, are you, Betty?"

"Frank?"

"You will tell him—about Marsh, I mean."

"Must I, Parrain—would he understand?"

"He will have to try, like the rest of his bewildered sex."

"Yes, I guess so. There couldn't be any other right way, could there? One has to pay, somehow. And then," brightening, "it won't be *quite* so bad, after all. If he doesn't understand at once, I can make it sound so bad and horrible that he'll

get angry, and then—and then—it will be all right.”

“Must you go so soon, Betty? I was hoping you could stay all day.”

“Must, must, Parrain. But I’m coming out another day, to bring daddy. And——”

“What is it, girlie?”

“And, please, Parrain, some time when you’re near to God, say a word for wicked Betty. No, don’t come all the way to the door. You just want to make a fuss about those old rubbers. I’m sure that’s it. Well, I know I did leave them here. Some one must have taken them. Why, if they aren’t on my feet, and they’ve been there all the time! Why didn’t you make me take them off in the house? Good-by. And see, Parrain, the mist has cleared!”

And when her step had died away he went straight up to the row of books, and, taking the one with which he had stopped, he fingered gently for the page. Swiftly, surely the good lines ran through his mind now:

“’Tis like that soft invading light,
That through all darkness shines,
The thread that through life’s somber web
In golden pattern twines.”

John Holcome's Wife

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN

WHEN John Holcome took Agnes McGorman from the apartment she had shared with her sister, he did so with the comfortable sense of being her benefactor as well as her spouse; he was relieving her from the necessity of working for a living. The evening after the ceremony, when he left her for a few moments to go into the smoking compartment of the Pullman car, he drew from his pocket the small book she had handed him in the morning. When she had given it to him she had smiled as she remarked, "You can take care of all my affairs now," and this had added to his self-complacency.

He took out the narrow booklet more because it was the handiest thing he could reach that belonged to *her* than for any great interest he had in what dowry she might be bringing. He discovered that the last balance was more than treble that in his own account, and his face fell. A little further investigation of the records of deposits showed that she had been in receipt of a salary

quite double the best his literary work had ever yielded him.

The information brought vastly more pain than pleasure. It told him that Agnes's marriage to himself was a doubtful benefit to her from a financial viewpoint. It took away the sense of being her protector. Worst of all, it made him feel contemptible in her sight, for he imagined that she would ever regard him as less of a success than herself. This first cloud upon his matrimonial horizon loomed up big and dark in an instant.

He had promised to return to her in ten minutes. His choice Havana persisted in going out, and he did not rise with great alacrity when he had consumed nearly an hour in finishing it. He wondered then whether she would notice any change in his attitude toward her. He knew he felt the change.

There were many things that he did not know about his wife.

He had no way of finding out that she had resigned her confidential secretaryship with a sigh of intense relief; that there had been no time in her business career when a real home with half the money she was getting would not have been

a most welcome change. Neither did it occur to his mind that the kind of work he was doing more than made up in her eyes for any deficiency in money matters. He had never been in a position to write without the thought of the dollars and cents his paragraphs would bring. It was natural that a question of money should assume undue size in his perspective.

Perhaps, 'if he had possessed a less nervous physical temperament, he would not have allowed the thing to prey upon his mind as it did during the first year of their life together. As it was, he let it spoil everything. The slightest difference of opinion he construed into an evidence of the independence she must feel. If she spoke of her sister or her past life, he imagined she was regretting the loss of the affluence her own abilities had afforded. If she laughed bravely at her culinary failures, he thought she regarded housekeeping beneath her. He was half ashamed of his growing resentment and tried to hide it from her, but she was quick to read men's thoughts, and saw through the veil of his silent moroseness and later irritability. She wept when alone, and wondered wherein she failed to please.

At the end of a year his unhappiness had taken

such hold upon him as to seriously affect the quality of his work. The one publishing house with which he had had a yearly contract refused to renew it. Articles and stories he sent elsewhere came back with notes politely stating that they were unavailable. All this served to increase his wretchedness. He tried some speculations, with the result that a large portion of Agnes's reserve followed his own remnant into the gulf that is never far from the Curb.

Of these misfortunes he told his wife nothing; nor of his futile attempts to find mercantile employment when he realized that the ordinary expenses of living would render them penniless in a few more months. Only by the accidental revelation of a mutual friend and confidant did she discover the state of their affairs.

The evening after these things came to her knowledge, she met her husband with a glad smile, when he came home late to dinner, tired from the endless tramping from one office door to another.

"John," she said, as she put her arms about his neck, "I want you to go back to your writing. My old employers have taken me on again, and we can live very nicely till you have better luck." She thought she would lift a burden from his

shoulders ; instead, she laid the last straw upon his broken spirit.

His retort was angry. "You would always have been better off without me. I do not see why you should have wished to marry. A fine respect you must have for your husband when you can put me in the attitude of a dependent upon my wife's labors. What sort of man do you think me? Do you imagine I can endure such a relationship as this?"

Harder words came upon her attempts to explain her intentions. He grew more unreasoning, unkind, and at last vulgarly rude, in a tirade against the "modern woman" in general, his wife as a dark example of the type.

Agnes was so hurt, so stunned at the sudden outburst, that words failed her. She realized that she was being insulted. Wondering if her husband had been drinking, she finally took refuge from his abuse in her own room. She heard the outside door slam half an hour later. Going into the living-room, she found a note upon the table.

"MY DEAR WIFE," it read, "I ask your pardon for the language I have used to you this evening. It only proves what I have thought for some time, that we would be happier and in better positions

apart. Do not believe that I have ceased to love you. I shall keep track of you; and, if the time ever comes when you really *need* a husband, and I can supply the need, I shall be only too happy for words to return.

“Your, at present, superfluous husband,
“JOHN.”

As the scant words burned their significance into her brain, she felt the floor rocking beneath her feet, and dropped weakly into the nearest chair. For hours she sat, too dazed to think or even weep. Gradually she reassembled her faculties for the task of solving the hidden cause of his misery and hers. As she read and re-read the brief letter, she came to know what had rankled in his breast; what had made him cold and indifferent to her efforts to be her best for him; what had weakened his self-respect, cooled his ambition, irritated his sensibilities; why he had so often misconstrued her words. She came to understand how the thing had grown daily; how it had oppressed and possessed him until it had rendered him too weak for the struggle after the higher things. She even thought she knew that he had realized that his own part was not all it should have been; and she be-

lieved it was a troubled conscience which had made him neglectful of religion in the later months. She gave to her mind the accurate diagnosis of his disaffection. *He was jealous of her past success.*

She loved him more than ever as she comprehended his weakness. All thought of personal wrong was sunk beneath the longing to heal his wounds. She felt, as never before, that he needed her. It strengthened the tie that bound her to him and made her desire him in an entirely new way. And this made more clear how much he had missed in thinking that she did not need him. She blamed her own very abilities, which had brought about a condition where they were again necessary.

She went to her desk and wrote one letter after another. Each she destroyed when she read it over. All she could say she had said this evening, and had failed to convince. The idea which possessed him was too poignant to be passed by; too near a mania to be overcome with argument. No amount of passionate avowal of the needs of her heart would avail. Nothing could be accomplished as long as the fact was plainly known to both of them that she was able to make a better living without than with him.

The little cuckoo clock in the hall chirped the hour of four as Agnes Holcome crept miserably into bed. The last of her notes had followed the others into the waste-basket. But she had found a basis for hope. Her strong, child-like faith told her that prayer would do what no human power could accomplish. In spite of the loss of sleep, she rose next morning in time to assist at Mass before going to business. In the evening she visited the church again and knelt long before the statue of the Blessed Virgin with its sweet, smiling face and its hands outstretched as betokening the Dispenser of favors to her children. During the weary months that followed, even down to the weeks when her health no longer permitted her to work, she went thus to the house of her Lord and prayed twice daily.

* * * * *

When John Holcome had put a thousand miles between himself and his home he experienced a sense of sharp awakening. It was not the awakening of conscience, nor yet of love for his wife. It was, rather, a clearing of the atmosphere in his brain. With the few dollars he had left he hired a cheap room, bought paper and pens, and then began to write.

There was a new vein of bitterness in his work which some people would not have liked, but it appealed to another class of readers, and some publishers were ready to take his manuscripts again. He wrote under an assumed name, and was hailed by the critics as a new writer. There was a tense straining in all that he did now. He produced his copy more rapidly than he had ever done before. The non-religious publishers gave him more for it than his old friends could afford. For the first time in his life he began to command such an income as the check-book of his wife had shown.

For a brief period his new success dazzled him. He was inclined to think he had been the gainer by draining the dregs of life's cup. It had given him a grasp upon the great, dissatisfied mass of mankind. Strange it is that nothing appeals more to the restless mind than the expressions of more unrest. Holcome knew that he was no longer offering balm to wounded hearts; that he was holding to parched lips the cup that would only increase their thirst. He found a morbid pleasure in keeping his own sores open, and he discovered that he was giving pleasure by doing the same for others. At the first the cash remuneration for

this questionable service more than satisfied him.

But after six months of feverish labor the kind of thing he was doing began to pall upon him. Perhaps there was some real awakening of his long-dormant conscience; perhaps his strained nerves were taking revenge for the treatment he had accorded them; perhaps he felt some return of the loneliness which had made life miserable for him before his marriage. He had left word with an old chum whom he could trust to keep his secret, that he was to be informed of the first signs that his wife was in any need. He now found himself watching the mails eagerly, not quite pleased with them though they brought him frequent and liberal payments.

It was in accord with his nature that any dissatisfaction should speedily grow to great importance. At the beginning he would not admit to himself that he did not wholly like his present position. One day the fact forced itself into recognition. Then he felt himself wretched; he called himself a fool; he gave way to utter disgust with the kind of teaching his pen had been used to promulgate. His cynicism began to melt into remorse. The things he was writing grew dull and

palled upon him. He went out into the streets to get away from the sense of depression.

His aimless steps led him past a little Italian church. After he had gone by he was seized with a sudden sense of guilt in not having lifted his hat before its door. He felt an impulse to go back and perform the reverence and yielded to the prompting. As he reached the steps the door was swung wide open by a woman coming out from her prayers. He had a full view of the painting behind the cheap altar. It was a rather realistic representation of the Madonna, before whose sorrowful eyes the holy Child held out His arms in the form of a cross.

Impulse again seemed to thrust him within the open portal. It placed him upon his knees in the very last pew. It fastened his eyes upon the crude picture till the tears flowed from them, and his lips moved in prayer for pardon. But it was calm resolution, not impulse, that led him, after a few moments, to enter the dingy confessional as another penitent came out. When he had finished his simple penance of ten "Hail Marys," he kept on repeating the prayer with earnest intention that he might go back and be a good husband to his wife.

At length he arose. There was the light of resolve in his eyes. He hastened to his rooms and began to pack his trunk and bags. The last through train had gone for the day. He resolved to take the first on the morrow, after he had received holy communion. He would go to his wife and tell her that, whether she needed him or not, he needed her to help him to be what he desired to be. .

In his impetuosity he did not glance at the mail on his table till he came to putting away his papers in a box for shipment. Then his eye fell upon the pale brown envelope of the telegraph company. He seized the message and tore it open. An insane terror came over him. He thought that here was word of Agnes's death. His eyes blurred, and it was some seconds before he could focus them upon the typewritten letters. At last he was able to spell them out. He read them through three times before the tears of joy blotted them entirely from view. The words of the telegram were:

"Come home to your wife immediately. She and your baby need you."

A Question of Caste

BY MAUD REGAN

SOMETIMES, when the breeze of memory sweeps aside the mist of years, I see a little winding road, its grass scarce furrowed by the passage of infrequent cart or car, along which Kathleen and Brian Carberry used to trudge in the glory of the Irish morning toward the happy-go-lucky school kept by old Kevin Quin—or not kept when the day was too fine entirely, and the invitation of the squire's trout stream no longer to be denied.

On such not unfrequent occasions there might have been noted, stationed respectively “up” and “down” the one road which in Tyrconnel leads everywhere, a brown-haired, fair-skinned, blue-eyed little girl, very neatly dressed for those regions, and a boy some few years her senior, whose darker face was cast in somewhat finer mould. These were Molly and Dermot Quin, the school-master's children, whose errand it was to apprise approaching scholars that the process of their education was temporarily suspended.

The bald statement that there would be no school that morning was accompanied neither by explanation nor apology, and though in some young minds there may have been a subconsciousness of shadowed pools and darting trout, the majority of the children, of whom poverty too soon would make anxious men and careworn women, took the holidays the gods provided with thankful and incurious minds. If of a conscientious turn, they straggled homeward to report the happening, their virtue was apt to be rewarded by an expression of surprise and a "Whatever has happened to bring you home at this time of day! Well, so long as ye're here, Biddy, I wish ye'd have an eye to the baby," or a "Thady, your father'll be glad of a hand in the field beyant."

If, on the contrary, they boldly took the key of the fields and made off with themselves until noon, their return was apt to be greeted with a resounding whack by way of emphasis to the irate exclamation, "Wisha, thin, what have ye been up to, ye young heart-scald, stravagin' the country all mornin' whin I seen the masther wid me own two eyes takin' himself over the hill wid his fishin' pole this two hours back!" These alternatives were for careful balancing before deciding upon the

use to which an accidental holiday might be turned.

One is almost glad to record the preponderance of backsliding in view of all the babies of her own little Biddy had subsequently to tend, and of the endless fields over which poor Thady bent early and late until the day came when some one dug the six-foot furrow where at last—and first—he rested.

Though in Tyrconnel “book-learning” is as dearly prized and highly venerated as well may be, few indeed of its children pursue their studies beyond the earliest dawning of their teens. This was a matter for bitter complaint with “the master,” who in sanguine youthful days dreamed of the little thatched, bare-of-paint, scant-of-forms schoolhouse as a center of Celtic scholarship, and ambitiously christened it “the Academy.” Familiar indeed to Father John’s ears was the master’s Jeremiad: “I no sooner get one batch over the pot-hook and hanger stage, and teach them to read in their prayer-books without spelling every other word, and begin to think of enlightening their ignorance with a glimmer of the humanities, than they’re up and away like puffs of thistle-down, and it’s all to begin again with their young

brothers and sisters. 'Tis an ancient Sisyphus I am, forever rolling uphill a stone that's forever falling. And 't isn't, mind you, that they haven't brains.

"There are plenty among them just as quick as my son Dermot, who takes to the classics like a duck to water. He'll go up to Dublin one of these fine days and show them that all the Quins aren't dead yet, though one has been as good as buried."

Dermot's vaunted scholarship was indeed no empty boast. At fifteen he could very well have taken any of those classes which the weary "Sisyphus" forsook for the temporary consolations of the trout stream, but that such a procedure would have been regarded as a pernicious innovation by a community in which "youth" and "levity" were considered as interchangeable terms. Moreover, he was conceded to be the handsomest lad in the parish, with his crisp black hair waving from a broad brow, his firm, cleft chin, flashing, steel-blue eyes and straight, short nose which might have been a direct gift from one of those Greek heroes in whose exploits he so delighted.

"He's far and away handsomer than Masther Brian Carberry for all he's a gintleman's son,"

was an opinion oft heard in Tyrconnel. "What an iligant-looking couple he and Miss Kathleen ud make, if only——"

The closing qualification implied, unfortunately, a tacit recognition of the social chasm which must ever separate the schoolmaster's son from a daughter of the Carberrys.

Two at least of the little quartette into which the Quins and Carberrys had drifted were cheerfully oblivious of such conditions as might separate them when once the boundaries of childhood's sweet democracy were over-passed. Between Molly and Brian there existed a most comfortable and comforting bond, in virtue of which Molly had acquired a champion and Brian an apologist of whose good offices he frequently stood in need. Truth to tell, his brilliant achievements in hurling and wrestling far outshone his scholastic attainments, and his obscure and inglorious position in the classes was such as to wring tears and protests from his more ambitious sister.

"The son of a scholar!" she would wail, when the disaster of his failure was more than usually complete.

"I'm sure I can't help that, Kathleen," Brian would placidly reply. "I had to be somebody's

son. So is Dermot Quin the son of a scholar, if you come to that."

"Yes, and he shows it," the girl would retort, flaring up in swift defense of her friend. "But surely, Brian," she would persist reproachfully, "you don't need to be shown the difference between father and Mr. Quin?"

"No more than I do between you and Molly, thank you, Miss Kathleen, and I'll tell you one difference you may not want to hear. She is much easier to get on with, and isn't forever flying into tantrums over some nonsense or other."

"I'm not cross, truly, Brian," his sister would plead with all the eloquence of soft voice and limpid brown eyes, "but you are growing up, you know, and what are you going to *be* unless you study?"

"Oh, I don't know—a farmer, I suppose—on a big scale, you know," he would add, in hasty deprecation of the storm he saw brewing in his sister's eyes.

"A farmer!" she would retort with scornful emphasis. "Then you had better make up your mind to marry Molly Quin."

"I might do worse," was Brian's philosophic reply.

The Carberrys and Quins alone of all the little school were confronted by no agony of indecision before ranging themselves definitely with "the sheep or the goats" on the occasion when the master's ukase proclaimed a holiday which home authorities were unlikely to confirm. For them the joys of a day a-field were clouded by no specter of wrath to come, and it was not until the long blue shadows stretched across the whin that they would take the road which led to the "Hill House."

With free, swinging steps, Kathleen and Dermot would lead the way, golden hair and crisp dark waves almost level, since hats were for discarding early in the holiday jaunt. Behind them Brian and Molly would trudge contentedly, the girl's round, good-natured face healthily tanned, the boy's coat brier-rent, and his boots hopelessly bemired.

Even in those regions where miles lengthen into leagues without changing their original designation, it was counted a "goodish step" from the schoolhouse to the Carberry dwelling. The road wound its way, always with an upward trend, past the barren "holdings" of the living and the hillside resting-place of the dead, and just as one had

abandoned hope of its leading anywhere but over the granite cliffs against whose bases summer seas lapped and winter storms raged, it halted before a gate set in a wall of roughly hewn stone.

Whenever Dermot Quin faced this barrier, whether at the ending of holiday rambles, or later when the "Academy" doors had closed irrevocably upon the things of childhood, he was conscious of a curious sinking of heart. For it seemed to symbolize those other barriers, less tangible but far more insurmountable, which separated him from Kathleen Carberry.

"There they go," he remembered to have said to the girl as the little scholars of the "Academy" scattered one evening across the highway like a bead necklace when the string is broken. "There they go, some in rags, some in jags, and *one* in a velvet gown. That is you, Kathleen."

"What nonsense, Dermot! It is the old blue serge I have worn all year," the girl answered.

But the "velvet gown" was an atmosphere rather than a reality. He saw the long line of velvet-clad ladies in the girl's pedigree, saw them stepping daintily across inlaid floors against tapestried backgrounds, almost as plainly as he beheld his sister Molly trudging sturdily across the bogs and

fields her mother and grandmothers had trodden. Such visions rose to vex him whenever Kathleen slipped from the freedom of the highway behind the stone walls which girded the wind-swept garden of the "Hill House."

The long, low, rambling dwelling which had once been the abode of an agent on one of the outlying family estates, was, in fact, the last entrenchment to which successive reverses had driven the Carberrys. Far superior to any dwelling which Tyrconnel boasted, it yet represented an immense descent from the Georgian mansion of warm-hued brick, many-windowed, ivy-clad, where Vincent Carberry's youth had been cradled. But every casement of the "Hill House" framed some wondrous outlook on billowy moor or restless silver sea, and Vincent Carberry, whose tastes were all a scholar's, noted no lack amid the distinguished simplicity of its interior appointments. One old servant quite easily kept everything in order with the exception of the master's books, with which she was not permitted to meddle. This prohibition her housewifely soul keenly resented and deplored.

"But the books are not really so untidy, Nora," Miss Kathleen would say consolingly. "Father has them all catalogued on a system of his own, and

perhaps the dust on the very top shelves may be like the cobwebs on old wine."

"And there's precious little of that these times," Nora would grumble as she went her way.

Lining every available wall space, his books made for Vincent Carberry a world where he found more congenial comradeship than in the world of flesh and blood. Within his book-lined walls the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" were no longer to be dreaded.

There was but one sorrow for which the printed page offered no lasting anodyne. It was an old sorrow now, but sometimes when Kathleen recalled him from his dream-world with the tones of her dead mother's voice, he felt the knife-thrust of pain as keenly as he had felt it fifteen years before. Sometimes he was vexed by an uneasy consciousness that he was not quite doing his best by Marion's children. Some day, for their sake, he must make an effort to take up the broken threads of life, must install the children amid scenes more in harmony with their birth and traditions, must send Brian to University, have Kathleen "presented."

It eased his conscience to regard these vague plans in the light of definite purposes whose execu-

tion was but delayed till opportunity was ripe. And if the "some day" was unduly deferred, the children were, meanwhile, abundantly content with the untrammelled, out-of-door life of the "Hill House."

To the girl her father represented a very embodiment of courtesy, of truth, of everything chivalrous and fine. As a child it had been her dearest delight to sit close beside him in the long twilight, to finger the bunch of old seals dependent from his silken watch-fob, and lure him into explanations of the heraldic devices they bore. Better than any fairy-tale it was to hear how "Sir Hilary charged at Agincourt," sure all the while that father would have done this and more. "Or," "gules," "Azure," the heraldic colors flashed before the girl's dreamy eyes, like the shimmer of Crusaders' banners. The Norman-French mottoes rang chivalrous and splendid in ears where the sordid language of the commonplace would be ever an alien tongue.

"Isn't it a splendid inheritance!" she would enthusiastically exclaim in an effort to arouse Brian's interest in the doctrine of "noblesse oblige."

"I can't see what good it does *us*," would reply the heir to an ancient pedigree and barren rent-

roll, whose outlook was essentially practical and modern.

One day Vincent Carberry's uneasy misgivings that the children, Kathleen particularly, were fast growing up and that in an atmosphere out of all harmony with their birth and traditions, received unlooked-for confirmation in the form of a letter from the outside world. From a cousin of his wife's it offered the hospitality of her Mayfair dwelling to Kathleen for the coming season, and ran in part as follows:

"The years which have made us old can not have stood still for Kathleen. She must be almost a young woman now, and a very lovely one, if the promise of her babyhood has been sustained. Now that my own girls are so splendidly settled, I shall be more than glad to do all in my power for poor Marion's daughter. It is quite time she had a glimpse of her own world unless you intend to immure her, a modern sleeping beauty, in the fastnesses of your Irish hermitage. One serious objection to this romantic arrangement is the exceeding improbability of a desirable prince finding his way to Tyrconnel."

"I am not so sure of that—it all depends upon the point of view," mused Vincent Carberry. His

eyes, straying from the frank, good-humored worldliness of the written page, fell upon a familiar spectacle which suddenly assumed a new significance. For lingering at the gate, in eager, animated converse, stood Dermot and Kathleen, the former a tall, handsome stripling more than fulfilling his boyish promise, the latter very fair and stately with the golden hair braided about her small classic head, and her skirts brushing her arched instep.

"Daisy Hungerford is right," he mused; "the years have not stood still, and the girl has no standards of comparison. Down here she might, for lack of them, drift into some undesirable connection. She is dreamy, unpractical, above all, young. What an excuse that last is for all that is wild and mad and sweet. Heigho! 'tis an excuse some of us will never have again."

The nebulous plans of the last few years suddenly crystallized to definite purpose, and as the girl came into the book-lined room, bringing fresh moorland whiffs of air with her, he cried cheerily: "Pussy, how would you like to go to London and see the Queen?"

The light leaped to the girl's dark eyes.

"Oh, father, could you really spare me?" she

asked in breathless delight. And thus, in a few seconds the matter was definitely disposed of.

"Isn't it strange, father," the girl commented dreamily, "Dermot Quin is off to study law in Dublin next week! The world stood still so long and now things are beginning to happen."

"The world has its own way of spinning on, with or without one," her father half sadly replied.

Kathleen had pictured to herself a London of historic landmarks, of dim, stately cathedrals, of the Tower, the museum, the art galleries, a tourist's or a student's London, which she never saw. For the world which claimed her was pledged heart and soul to the business of pleasure-seeking, to an endless round of dining and theatergoing and dancing; of homecomings in the pale dawn. Perhaps the pleasantest feature of its kindness to her was the fact that its hospitable welcome was accorded her as her father's daughter.

"Vincent Carberry's daughter!" stately dowagers would exclaim, taking the girl's hand in kindly clasp, and intently scanning the flower-like face which was already arousing its share of admiration and envy. "Pray, are you as charming as your father, my dear?"

"I am afraid not," the girl would reply with shy delight. How sweet it was to know his world remembered him! that it ratified her own estimate of her father's fine, distinctive charm! How pleasant to incorporate its greetings and remembrances in those gay girlish bulletins which almost daily found their way to Tyrconnel!

That was a glittering Vanity Fair, through whose tinsel booths the girl moved with a curious sense of its unreality and transitoriness. Quite suddenly some night its torches would flare out, its bands steal away, its masquers vanish like the dream-people they were, and she would awake to the reality of winds sweeping fresh and sharp over miles of open country, of thundering surf on granite cliffs. Meanwhile she brought to its unfamiliar spectacles and activities the zest of youth, achieving, to Mrs. Hungerford's delight, a success as immediate as it was complete. On only one score could the most captious chaperon have found cause for complaint: the girl's perverse indifference to the great business of a suitable settlement,—that end toward which all this seemingly inconsequent pleasure seeking ought logically to tend.

"Such unexceptional opportunities as that penniless girl has had," her cousin confided to a

sympathetic friend. "It is really refreshing to know that the marrying men are not all as mercenary as *Punch* would have us believe. I hadn't an idea golden heads stood such a chance against golden pockets. But there! What's the use of it when the golden heads hold as little practical sense as Kathleen Carberry's? Now, my Maud and Edith were so different, so reasonable. They married off directly with half her looks. Having undertaken the girl, one of course feels a certain responsibility. But heaven knows what ideal she has enshrined; some medieval anomaly, half-saint, half-crusader, I suppose."

Mrs. Hungerford's surprise and vexation would have mounted could she have known that one by one the gilded or titled suitors of *Vanity Fair* were brought into unfavorable comparison with a certain lad of the peasant class grubbing away in a Dublin law office. Those were days to be marked with a white stone which brought to Kathleen one of her father's quaint, charming letters. "All the best sunsets have come to console me for your absence," he wrote. "Also a case of new books from Dublin, at which Nora looks unutterable things. Churlish Nora, to grudge me those windows through which, from my hermitage, I yet keep an

outlook on the world of art and letters. Your letters are windows, too, giving upon a world I used to know rather thoroughly; rose-colored windows, which most happily change its aspect. You say it still remembers me—almost incredible, but gratifying withal.

“Brian is coaching for University with that learned disciple of Izaak Walton, who, I always think, might have posed for Goldsmith’s picture of the village pedagogue.

“The boy displays a praiseworthy diligence, though sometimes I fancy he is actuated less by interest for the classics than for the *beaux yeux* of the master’s pretty daughter. We shall have to send him with all speed to Dublin and avert a *mésalliance*.

“That is all I think of, except that your father is growing old. Rather a sharp twinge in the cardiac region reminds him of this as he describes himself

“Desolately and fondly,

“VINCENT CARBERRY.”

Happy in the perusal of the foregoing letter the girl had gone out with Mrs. Hungerford on a bright, never-to-be-forgotten morning within a week of the time set for her departure. On her

return after a particularly crowded day, she noticed, lying upon the carved hall-table, the pink slip of a telegram bearing her address.

"Arrived two hours ago, miss. We didn't know where to look for you," the footman explained.

"Perhaps father has decided to come for me after all," Kathleen said, referring to a pleasant possibility she and her cousin had lately discussed. But even as she spoke, the color drained slowly from her face, and she stood a very frozen image of young despair, gazing with wide, frightened eyes upon a world from which all brightness had been suddenly wiped.

"Father died this morning," Mrs. Hungerford read on the fateful pink slip which had fluttered to the floor. She subsequently commented to her intimates upon the strange coldness of Kathleen's behavior. "Not a tear, my dear, not a sob! Only some question about time-tables. I assure you, I could hardly answer her for weeping. Of course, I offered to go home with her, but she seemed actually to prefer traveling alone."

In fact, the girl, standing dry-eyed upon some dim peak of agony, scarce heard the conventional platitudes of sympathy. She was only conscious of a wild desire to escape from this hard, glittering

world, which had no place for the sad and sorry, back to Tyrconnel, where people said, even when such awful things befell, "Welcome be the will of God!" Down there she might learn, perhaps, to bear it.

And yet never again to see the dark head, silver-streaked, bent over the familiar books; never to hear the rich, mellow voice, with its indescribable tenderness of inflection! Never, never! The word was a flaming sword barring all the golden gates of her youthful paradise.

* * * * *

Down in Tyrconnel they have a saying (which is usually but a prelude to fresh discursiveness), "Well, to make a long story short," and this is precisely what I shall say in the chronicling of those three dark years following upon Vincent Carberry's death.

In the first shock of bewilderment and pain, Kathleen scarcely realized how often Dermot Quin had stood between her and the intrusion of those sordid details which follow on the train of such a bereavement. It hardly occurred to her that his protracted absence from Dublin might be prompted by a desire to be unobtrusively helpful;

it was only in after days that she realized how wisely he had guided her in those difficult new ways in which her feet were set.

Amid the chaos of her father's affairs, where time and careful management might ultimately restore some sort of order, two assets alone stood forth as of immediate and permanent value: the "Hill House" with all its contents, and the modest fortune which had come to Kathleen from her mother.

"I am afraid there will be very little money, Dermot," Kathleen had said; adding, with proud loyalty, "Father never cared for such things; but I think perhaps the books are valuable." And so it proved.

Through Dermot's agency some of the rarer editions were disposed of at Christie's, while others went direct to bibliophiles prepared to pay handsomely for the indulgence of their hobby. With the proceeds it was possible to fulfil Vincent Carberry's intention of sending Brian to University, where he speedily achieved an enviable popularity, but, alas! no scholastic distinction, for all his stubborn plodding and conscientious endeavor to second Kathleen's efforts in his behalf. It was a year after her father's death when the question

Kathleen long had dreaded on Dermot's lips at length found utterance.

She had known she must deny the appeal of her own heart, as Vincent Carberry's daughter must answer in accordance with the traditions of her father's world; but though she had nerved herself to their utterance, she had not dreamed what a two-edged sword those words would prove which cut Dermot Quin from her life.

"Oh, I am so sorry for all this, Dermot," she cried, a world of pain in her sad young eyes. "I am so sorry. I shall never marry. I must live for Brian as I meant to have lived for father."

Against this decision Dermot had not appealed. To "make things easier for Kathleen" had grown to be so much the habit of his life, that in this crisis, quite characteristically he thought first of the girl's distress.

"It was all a mistake, Kathleen," he said bravely. "You must not let it worry you. I should never have ventured to ask—under other circumstances—but somehow you seemed so alone, and I had a wild hope you might care for me a little, enough perhaps to make your cares and worries mine. It isn't in the least your fault. It

was only that I mistook kindness and old friendliness for something rather different."

"Oh, it isn't that, Dermot," the girl began sadly, and then fell silent. For who could explain the intricacies of those impalpable, gossamer threads of which were spun the web that held her fast.

"You must never remember my folly, Kathleen," Dermot had said, taking her cold little hands in his for good-by. "And you mustn't let it spoil our friendship. *That* has always been the best thing in my life, Kathleen, and I couldn't bear to lose it."

But somehow Kathleen was aware thereafter of a subtle change in the old frank friendliness of their relations which could neither be defined nor denied. There were still many books in the "Hill House," and to these Kathleen turned for solace. "I must try to look on life through father's windows," she said, recalling sadly the whimsical conceit embodied in his last words. But somehow the effort proved a failure. She did not bring to the attempt her father's ripe scholarship, nor those years "which bring the philosophic mind" and make the cold rôle of onlooker at the human spectacle natural, or possible. So one day in deep discouragement she tossed aside a book which

"laughed Spain's chivalry away." Her last resource had failed her.

"I feel as though I, too, had been tilting at windmills," she said, with a dreary little smile. It was but a few days after that Brian translated into other phrase a like opinion of the fantastic, impracticable standards by which she sought to regulate their lives.

"You make yourself very uncomfortable to no end, Kathleen," he concluded, in a final burst of impatience. "It would greatly simplify matters if you were to ground yourself in some of those homely proverbs that represent the accumulated wisdom of the ages. That one, for example, concerning the impossibility of fitting a square peg in a round hole. It's precisely what you have been trying to do in my case—oh, with the kindest, most unselfish motives, dear," he said, noting the hurt look in the grave young eyes, so prone to look on life through a mist of dreams and illusions. "But we are confronted by a condition not a theory, as the 'dons' say. Faith 'tis about all of their wisdom that remains with me," Brian continued with a rueful smile. "Theoretically, my father's son should be a scholar and a gentleman. In all essentials I hope he is the last, but not quite

in the way you hoped, Kathleen. Well, *actually*, he has no head for anything beyond the three R's, and a very good notion of farming, and a general idea that if he is to succeed at all it must be in his own way. I know it is a disappointment, Kathie, but I can't let you throw any more good money after bad, with an idea that some day I will adorn a learned profession. It isn't in me, and after all it's much better to be a first-class farmer than a tenth-rate lawyer."

"A farmer! Oh, Brian!" Kathleen wailed.

"And another thing, Kathleen," Brian persisted, nerving himself for the final disclosure. "I am afraid you won't approve, but, but—the fact is, I've proposed to Molly Quin."

"Oh, Brian, Brian!" Kathleen sobbed against his coat-sleeve. The stately structure of her ambition had crumbled to swift decay, and standing amid the ruins a voice kept whispering in the secret places of her heart. "And it was for this you denied yourself love and happiness; for this you sent Dermot out of your life!"

Pursuing the purpose of making a short tale of a long one, I will hasten over the dark places of Kathleen's story. It is so much pleasanter to follow her out into the sunlight, whose brightness

these remembered shadows served but to enhance, to recount how the common-sense of Brian and Molly eventually saved the happiness of their elders from hopeless shipwreck.

For, as Kevin Quin would have phrased it, Brian had "severed the Gordian knot" of convention and prejudice. The head of the Carberry family had forsaken those lone altitudes where Kathleen would have had him dwell. How futile and mistaken under such circumstances had a mere girl elected to inhabit forever the bleak heights which love could never scale! In some oblique way, Brian may have contrived to hint as much to Kathleen, and Molly, kind, comfortable, little Molly, have whispered in Dermot's ear the counsel which emboldened him the second time to put his fortune to the proof. Be that as it may, their names appear upon the parish register, not very far below Brian's and Molly's, and 'tis said no handsomer couple ever walked out of Tyrconnel's little church in the glory of a spring morning. "From that good day to this," as the saying goes, Dermot's fortunes prospered amain, and to-day scarcely any child in Dublin but can point you out that shining light of the Irish bench who has lately had a handle tacked to his name.

When it became known that his name figured for a baronetcy on a recent list of birthday honors, they said in Tyrconnel, "She did not make such a bad match of it after all, did she now?" And the very old added, "Pity his poor father wasn't spared to see it."

But alack, the stone of learning may lie forever at the hill's foot for all of Kevin Quin. Another Sisyphus must bend his strength to the task he has long abandoned. Summer winds may woo, shadowed pools may beckon, but never more, seeking classical warrant for his stolen holiday, will he murmur: "*Dulce est desipere in loco,*" and exchanging birchen rod for slim bamboo, gayest truant of all the little school, go smiling on his way.

Amor Thaumaturgus

BY MARION AMES TAGGART

NEITHER by the passing of years, nor by any sort of affliction, had the Crawford sisters been forced below the surface of things. They were two strikingly pretty girls, abounding with health and high spirits, and they resembled the lilies of the field, inasmuch as fine raiment, abundance of warmth and food came to them without their thought or seeking, from the largess of a proud father who, so far from restricting them, openly expressed his pleasure in seeing them "keep their end up" among their friends.

They were young, "practically twins," Kitty, the elder by sixteen months, said; joyously, heedlessly, noisily they asserted their slight excess over twenty, and went their way in daily pursuit of pleasure and admiration.

Their father's frail sister might not have seemed so thoroughly middle-aged—with the emphasis on the *aged* at that—if Kitty and Della Crawford had not been so obstreperously young. As it was,

Miss Elise Crawford was in danger of becoming early-old. She was a slight creature, as gentle and shrinking as her nieces were dominating. She had never been well; she was sensitive to draughts, to chills of any sort, and her mental attitude seemed apologetic, as of one who could not flourish in the atmosphere more robust people desired. She drew her fleecy shawls around her as a panoply for her neuralgic body, and in like manner enveloped herself in her piety, her love of books, of flowers, of children, as far as possible keeping out of sight her tastes and her discomforts. She seemed rather like one who had renounced youth, than one whom youth had deserted.

Her brother was kind to Elise in his careless, generous way. He gave her a home in which he grudged her nothing, but it never occurred to him that she might need more than was obvious to him. The nieces were kindly contemptuous—if that may be—to their Aunt Elise. They laughed at her fleecy shawls, and at her sentiments, her fancies, if one imprudently betrayed itself. They laughed even at her piety, at her habit of getting up in the gray chill of wintry mornings for the unobligatory Mass, at her love of the lonely church in the twilight.

It was foolish to take the risk of disregarding commands, for one would want to be comfortable in that dimly realized future life, but piety was a thing that it was equally foolish to overdo, and why should one be made uncomfortable by exceeding one's obligations? This was the unformulated philosophy of the Crawford sisters, and they went their way to dances, dinners, theaters, while Miss Elise Crawford was increasingly relegated to the old maidenhood which seemed, subtly, to be a reflex action of her nieces' loudly proclaimed belledom.

There was method in the madness with which Kitty and Della pursued pleasure. To be admired of all men was delightful, yet it was but an interlude to the real business in hand, which was a brilliant marriage. Miss Elise, with her youthful sentiment, never got accustomed to the way these girls, thirteen years her junior, incalculably older than she ever would be, regarded and discussed their chances of drawing a prize in the markets in which they indefatigably exhibited their charms, in the hope of a high bidder—two high bidders, in fact.

One night—it was really one morning—Kitty and Della returned jubilant from a small dinner

and a dance. Their shrill voices and ready laughter as they called back and forth between their rooms awakened Miss Elise from her sleep, already of three hours' duration. At the breakfast table the cause of their hilarity was disclosed. Their father had taken himself off an hour before the girls came down, according to his custom, and there was no one but Aunt Elise, flushed and sweet from her walk to and from church in the bright air, to whom to confide their latest triumph.

"We met a new man last night, Aunt Elise," announced Kitty from behind the coffee.

"We were asked to a dinner given in his honor," supplemented Della. "He is Duncan Laurwick, the author, traveler——"

"And probable ambassador," Kitty interrupted her. "He is simply great!"

"He is one of the authors who don't have to auth; he has a large fortune, but he travels and writes and goes into politics because he's too big a man to rust out," cried Della. "Really, you ought to see him! You will, too, because, what do you think? The great man talked a lot to your two little nieces, and he is coming here to call shortly. He is heaps older than we are—he must be over forty—but we treated him like an equal!"

Della's laugh was echoed by Kitty.

"The girls are all wild over him; he's not only a famous man, but he's famously rich, and Del and I think we've scored in winning his attention for an evening," Kitty continued the antiphony. "In fact we hope that we've made an impression, but whether it's one of us, or both of us who has—have, what ought I say?—done it, we can't tell. We can only trust to double-barreled shots at first, and then maybe he'll single us out. He's the catch of years, but, obviously, we can't both marry him."

"Oh, Kitty!" murmured Miss Elise, protestingly. "It—but there's no use in my telling you that I never like that sort of jesting."

"Jesting, Miss Elise Crawford! We're in serious earnest. It is premature, but it is not a joke. Do you suppose either of us—or any of the girls—would not jump at the chance to be Mrs. Duncan Laurwick?" cried Kitty.

"Indeed we would!" affirmed Della. "But of course we know it would not be easy to get the position. Mr. Laurwick has met a good many girls, pretty, clever girls, in the course of his distinguished career! However, we mean to do our best to be attractive, for you never can tell! When he comes, you being our chaperon, we want you to

look your best. Wear your new gray gown, and be nice, and for goodness' sake, Aunt Elise, don't be shy! It's so ridiculous for a woman of your age, living as we live, to act like a sixteen-year-old, or a country villager! Just be nice, and back us up."

"I'll try, Della," murmured Miss Elise meekly. She was ashamed of her shyness; she did not realize that it came from her consciousness of the keen, amused eyes of these self-sufficient damsels.

When the great man came, as he did after just sufficient time to prove himself neither eager nor forgetful, the Misses Crawford were at home. If the truth were known they had been risking their roses by being at home uninterruptedly since they had met him, lest they lose his call. They came down, pretty, blooming, in faultless attire, and Duncan Laurwick's eyes rested on them with the pleasure all men must feel in the sight of beauty.

"Very glad you remembered us, Mr. Laurwick," said Kitty, giving him her hand.

"Girls labor under such a disadvantage in being so numerous and so similar," added Della, following suit with a compliment-provoking smile.

"There is no such thing on earth as a similar girl," said Mr. Laurwick, somewhat skilfully escaping pitfalls. Then Miss Elise came into the

room in her gray gown. Her brown hair waved softly back from a forehead of perfect calm and purity. Her eyes were as gray as her gown, and the color of a wild rose was in her cheeks, called there by her effort to obey her nieces' injunctions, as well as by excitement in meeting a celebrity. She moved lightly, with a timid grace that gave her the effect of youthfulness, and at the same time intangibly conveyed her remoteness from the world around her. Mr. Laurwick's face expressed his surprise before he recognized it himself. Kitty and Della Crawford were "stunning girls," of the most modern type, on whom he found himself calling in an idle mood, but this small creature had walked out of a Jane Austen story, and, apparently, into a poem.

"This is our aunt, Miss Crawford, our dragon chaperon," said Kitty, introducing her.

The visitor murmured expressions of his "pleasure," while inwardly marveling. Kitty and Della desperately wished that there was some startlingly commanding talent which they could summon to their aid. They were bright, but so were other girls; pretty, but not they alone. What they wanted was a gift which should enchain this hero's eye and mind. They doubted the enthralling na-

ture of their conversation. However, they valiantly began to converse, rattling off quick speeches, supplementing each other, affording each other a chance for what they wanted to say, calling upon extreme vivacity to supply for wit, of which, to do them justice, neither lacked her quota.

"I wonder if he is one of those who like to talk of what they've written, or whether he hates it? Anyway, we haven't read more than that one book of his which we got since the dinner. But I must risk it," thought Kitty, rapidly. "We don't read much solid matter, Mr. Laurwick," she said, sweetly, "but I want to tell you that Della and I have been entranced with your wonderful book on the Upper Nile. I may as well confess that we were inspired to get it by meeting you." She laughed prettily; Kitty's laugh was one of her accomplishments.

"Thank you," said Mr. Laurwick with disconcerting gravity. "Do you read travels, Miss Crawford?"

"I have cared more for your poems, Mr. Laurwick," said Miss Elise.

The girls looked at each other aghast. They had no idea that he had written poetry, and Aunt Elise—the sly thing!—had not spoken of it when

they told her that they had met him. Mr. Laurwick turned to the small gray figure, and straightway plunged into a discussion of poets and poetry that left the girls stranded on the dry sands of their indifference. If it had been any one else but Aunt Elise, it would have been trying, but evidently their guest was enjoying his talk, and anything that made the Crawford house attractive was a boon; her nieces felt grateful to the old maid aunt who was actually forgetting to be shy.

That first visit of the lion was not his last. To Kitty and Della's delight he came again, and yet again, often enough after a time to keep them deliciously excited, their friends envious. Soon the calls developed into expeditions to picture exhibitions, to theaters, concerts; the party always made up of both the Crawford girls and the little chaperon, to whom Mr. Laurwick was so attentive, so considerate, that Kitty and Della soon began to admire him sincerely for himself, as well as for his achievements.

Miss Elise was changing. The fleecy shawls were discarded, and with them much of the premature effect of years. She minded draughts less, she wore her hair more becomingly, more carefully dressed. She did not talk more at home, but some-

times she hummed snatches of songs softly, and her pale face rarely lacked its delicate wild rose color. Health, youth seemed to be—not returning, but dawning, for little Miss Elise.

The girls, being girls, and these two girls in particular, were not blind to the alteration in their aunt, nor slow to understand its cause. They laughed over it privately. “Aunt Elise is beginning to sit up and take notice. At her age!” cried Della.

“She is younger than he is, after all,” returned Kitty gloomily. “Of course it is ridiculous in her, though. But, Del, we don’t know whether it is you or I!”

“We know so little that, if it were possible, I should think it were neither,” agreed Della. “But no man who is fêted and entertained and invited as he is would waste so much time and money taking us around if it weren’t one of us.”

“No,” said Kitty. “But by this time we ought to see one straw to indicate which way the wind blows.”

There was a straw waving in the breeze that night. It was a dinner, and Della had been taken out by Mr. Laurwick. Opposite to them, near each other, sat Miss Crawford and Kitty. Della

caught her companion gazing across the flowers with an expression that instantly vanished as she looked up; she had not seen on whom his eyes had been resting, but when he spoke she felt sure that they had been on Kitty.

"Miss Crawford is very beautiful," he said.

Della's heart sank. She tried hard to live up to her compact with her sister not to grudge the victor the spoils. "Yes, Kit's a beauty," she said briefly.

"Kit? Oh, your sister! Yes, she's an uncommonly pretty girl, but it was not she I meant. She will have to live—and suffer, perhaps—before she can be beautiful. I meant Miss Crawford, the eldest Miss Crawford; your young aunt."

"Aunt Elise!" gasped Della. "She's thirty-six!"

"Just at the age when a woman may dare to be beautiful, not merely handsome! Seven years younger than I, Miss Della," smiled Mr. Laurwick.

Della never knew how the rest of that dinner passed. She realized that it was no longer necessary for her to try to charm Duncan Laurwick. It had suddenly been revealed to her that Aunt Elise had already accomplished the difficult task.

Later the Crawford sisters, dazed by their dis-

covery, saw Mr. Laurwick coming toward them from the conservatory. His face was beaming with joy, and Elise Crawford, blooming, young, and very lovely, came forth beside him, with radiant eyes looking upon a world which Love, the Wonder-Worker, had transformed.

A Temporary Cook

BY MAGDALEN ROCK

"WHERE in the world did you come from, Betty?" little Mrs. Askew asked when she had finished kissing the slender, golden-haired girl beside whom the young matron looked very diminutive.

Betty Lester laughed.

"From Mrs. Borrough's carriage. I met her in Paris, and promised to pay her a visit. Quite by accident I heard you lived in this neighborhood, so I have come to spend a nice long afternoon with you, if you will have me."

"Of course I will! How delightful! And won't you stay and see Ted? He comes from Birmingham on the last train. That's about seven o'clock."

Betty hesitated.

"Oh, you must see my husband!" Mrs. Askew was not yet a year-old bride, and was intensely proud of her husband and her tiny villa. "And you'll dine with us, Betty."

"Let me speak to the coachman." Betty went

out to where that dignitary was sitting in state. She was back in a minute or two.

"He was to come for me at six o'clock," she explained, "but he says he can come as readily at nine. So I'll wait and see your Ted, Rose. Is he a very wonderful person?"

"I think so," Mrs. Askew allowed; and then Betty laid aside her outdoor garments, and made a tour of the small house.

The two young women had been close friends in spite of the fact that Mrs. Askew had been pupil teacher in the convent in France where Betty Lester had been educated. Betty was the only child of a wealthy manufacturer, whose death a year after her return from France left her uncontrolled mistress of a large fortune, while Mrs. Askew had, prior to her marriage to Ted, been earning her bread as a nursery governess, and that without much advantage to herself or any one else.

"How is it you are still unmarried, Betty?" Mrs. Askew inquired. "Do you disapprove of matrimony, like so many modern women?"

Betty answered by a non-committal laugh, and Mrs. Askew's thoughts turned in another direction.

"You'll get a badly cooked dinner, or perhaps none at all," she said laughingly. "The cook has

had a holiday to go to see her mother, and Rhoda, who opened the door to you, hasn't any idea of cooking. Neither have I."

"Oh, that's all right," Betty remarked carelessly, and began making inquiries concerning some of her former fellow-pupils at the convent. In question and answer and reminiscences of their school-days the time passed rapidly till Rhoda brought in an orange-colored envelope on a salver.

"Excuse me, Betty," Mrs. Askew said, and opened the envelope. She gave a little gasp of dismay. "O dear! how unfortunate!"

"What's the matter, Rose? Nothing amiss with Ted?"

"Oh, no—but he says he is bringing an old friend home to dinner. There's the telegram."

"Wrinkles in London for a few days on business for his firm. Coming with me to dine and sleep," Betty read aloud. "Where does Wrinkles come from?" she asked.

"Wrinkles is a school-name only," Mrs. Askew explained. "He and Ted were great chums. I feel as if I knew him from hearing Ted talk. He lost a lot of money and got a situation abroad. But what on earth am I to do about dinner? I can fry a chop—that's about the extent of my culinary

abilities—and I shouldn't like Wrinkles to dine off a chop. O dear, I wish I hadn't let cook away to-day!" Little Mrs. Askew was on the point of tears.

"I say," Betty Lester proposed, "let me be your cook. I'm quite capable of getting up an excellent dinner—I have no end of certificates."

"Oh, nonsense!"

"Not at all. And the certificates are backed up by a good deal of practical knowledge. Last year my cook had some sort of fever, and the servants got frightened and left. I cooked for myself, the invalid, and nurses, and also for a cousin who was visiting me. So put off that woebegone look, Rose, and show me your stock of provisions. We can chat as well in the kitchen, too, as here. Come along."

Soon Betty, enveloped in a huge apron belonging to the absent cook, was busy among the pots and pans. Rhoda was kept occupied in running errands, while Mrs. Askew gave some slight assistance, admired her friend's capabilities, lamented her own deficiencies, and deplored the necessity that had transformed Betty into a cook.

"Go and make yourself pretty," Betty, who was looking very lovely herself, counseled as seven

o'clock approached. "I'll take a last look at the table in the meantime."

"But, Betty," Mrs. Askew began, "Ted will be so angry if you don't dine——"

"Oh, go away!" Betty interrupted. "I'm not afraid of Ted's anger, and I'm not going to have a very *recherche* dinner spoiled by bad dishing up. I'm in possession of the kitchen, remember."

In due time Ted Askew and his friend arrived. The cook paused at her work for a moment as the faint sound of a man's laugh reached her domain. Then she gave herself an impatient bodily and mental shake.

"You had better attend to the gravy, Bet," she addressed herself, "and forget there was ever such a personage as Mark Dale. I hope the dinner will be a success."

Ted's eyes met his wife's across the table. They said that it was a huge success, and their visitor evidently appreciated the viands set before him. The conversation, too, did not flag. Mrs. Askew had heard enough of her husband's friend to make her take an interest in their recollections of by-gone days. When dessert was placed on the table the visitor made a complimentary remark regarding Mrs. Askew's cook. The little woman laughed.

"Oh, she wasn't always a cook," she said, "she was a great heiress once upon a time."

"I didn't know that," Ted remarked, and just then there came an appalling series of screams from the kitchen.

"That's Rhoda!" Mrs. Askew exclaimed, rising hastily. "What on earth has happened to her!"

She hastened to the kitchen, but as the shrieks continued Ted and his guest both followed. The cook was bent over Rhoda trying to quiet her, and Mrs. Askew was sitting on a chair laughing.

"A mouse ran up Rhoda's sleeve," Mrs. Askew explained. "O dear!"

She looked up to find her husband and his friend steadfastly regarding the cook's golden head, and just then Betty turned round.

"Mr. Dale!" she said, concealing her surprise rather effectually. "I'm afraid Rhoda startled you."

"Oh, Rhoda, do stop!" Mrs. Askew pleaded, and as the maid-servant threatened to become hysterical her mistress escorted her to her bedroom, while Ted Askew, with a wisdom born of chance, retreated to the dining-room. Mark Dale seized his opportunity and Betty Lester's hands.

"Betty," he said hastily, "I can't say I am sorry you have lost your money, for now I can ask you

to be my wife. I couldn't while I was a wretched pauper, and you the possessor of thousands of pounds a year. I am earning a fair salary in Montreal. Will you come to Canada with me?"

Betty made no verbal answer, but Mark was satisfied. When Mrs. Askew entered the kitchen she found the two apparently very happy.

"Mrs. Askew," Mark said, "congratulate me. Betty has promised to marry me."

"Betty, is that so?"

"Yes," Betty replied demurely, "but Mark will try to get out of his engagement when he learns the true state of affairs."

"The true state of affairs!" Mark repeated.

"Yes," Betty went on smiling, "but I'll keep him to his word. Tell him, Rose, that I am only your cook for to-night."

Mrs. Askew explained how Betty came to be in the kitchen, and Mark's face clouded for a second.

"I thought your money was gone, Betty. It kept me from asking you to marry me years ago; but I am afraid I can't give it up now—since it is attached to you," he said.

"How very magnanimous!" Mrs. Askew tilted her nose. "However, come, both of you, and tell Ted. Oh, Betty, I'm so glad!"

Andy Carew's Gold

BY MAGDALEN ROCK

THE kitchen of Mountrath farmhouse was a pleasant apartment. Two large, deep-seated windows looked out over the undulating meadow-lands to the red and golden glory of the wintry sunset. The big, polished oaken dresser was laden with row after row of gleaming crockery and glistening tinware. The tables and the bench that ran round one side of the kitchen were as white as soap and water and an abundance of scrubbing could make them. From the blackened ceiling there hung several pieces of bacon, peas and beans in nets ready for spring sowing, and several bunches of camomile and scented herbs. The floor was of red tiles, the walls were whitewashed, the big clock, though silent, was picturesque, and the peat fire on the open hearth flared cheerily in the gathering dusk of the short December day.

"Where's the mistress?" Mrs. Nancy Gilligan questioned as she entered the kitchen. "And Miss Blake?"

"They're gone to the chapel to do some decorating for Christmas," Betty Moore returned, "and I promised to stay till they'd get back. The little girl is in bed, thank goodness! I got her persuaded to lie down a bit, for 'tis at rest she can't be at all. Oh, ay, she's sure to rest an hour or two."

"Is she?" Nancy looked relieved. "And is the creature asleep?"

"Ay, sound as a top. Sure, she goes to sleep the minute her head touches the pillow. And little wonder! She's never still, is Rosie Carew, and never out of mischief, never. Do you know what she did this blessed day?"

"No," Nancy was not anxious to set Betty's tongue on her charge's delinquencies; "nothing good, I'm sure. I say, Betty, couldn't you step out a bit with me? I'm told the Connors have come to Mrs. Reid's wake for an hour or two."

"The Connors from Dunmore! Sure they weren't friendly at all!"

"Well, they're there. And every one of them in black silk and velvet mantles. They look to be on the top of the world. I don't like going in alone."

"But I can't leave the child," Betty objected.

"She's asleep, don't you say? And what will

harm her for half an hour or so? Not a thing! And wouldn't Mary Carew be as well looking after her niece as *travishing* to the church with holly and ivy and all that? She can't hold the farm much longer either," Nancy ended.

"I doubt not, I doubt not," Betty assented. "'Tis the queer come-down for the Carews that used to be so well-to-do and so open-handed."

"That's so," Nancy commented. "Well, are you coming or aren't you?"

Betty was not disinclined for further gossip, and for a sight of the dead Mrs. Reid's rich relations. She lighted a candle and proceeded, with Nancy in her wake, to an adjoining room where a little girl lay in a small bed. Had the two women been keen-sighted they might have seen a dark-fringed eyelid uplifted for a fraction of a second.

Betty bent over the child. "She's sound! and isn't she good-looking!"

The listening child grinned inwardly. Betty usually described her as a dusky imp.

"Oh, ay," Nancy agreed indifferently. "Tuck her up there, and come away. We'll be back in no time."

The two women set out for "the wake-house," gossiping, as they went, over the Carews.

"'Tis the loan-fund bank that's putting Mary Carew out," Nancy said. "There was always a loan from it, but when times were good and Mary's father—God rest him!—making plenty out of the mill there, he was always able to meet the interest on the loan. But times are changed. Every one's eating white bread and Indian meal, and the old mill is left idle. Sure, its wheel used to go round night and day."

"That's so. And then there were losses in cattle," Betty said. "Now the loan-fund company is going to sell the farm and the dear knows what Mary, the creature, will do."

"Wasn't there something between her and Peter Dogherty?" Nancy asked.

"So I heard, but Peter, sure, would need to marry an heiress, whose money would portion off his sisters—five of them. I heard Mary refused him because that she won't have sixpence to call her own when everything's paid. She talks of going to America and taking Rosie."

"Oh, ay, Rosie's on her hands, being an orphan."

"A cousin's child. Dear, oh! when I was young, people used to talk of the gold that old Andrew Carew had—bags and bags of it. He was Mary's great-grandfather."

"Now, now!" Nancy clicked her tongue.

"Ay. It was in the troublesome times when the yeomen were doing as they liked on their Catholic neighbors. Old Andy had the gold stored, his own savings and that of a brother who was in Australia. He hid it for fear of the Orange 'Yeos' getting it. And then he died sudden and the gold was never heard of."

Nancy again clicked her tongue. "What a pity it wouldn't turn up for Mary!"

"It won't now," Betty said. "Well, here's the house, and there's a car. I suppose the Connors came on it."

"No less! and the driver in a blue coat and gilt buttons," Nancy remarked.

"The conceit of some people!" said Betty scoffingly. "I mind when they wouldn't have despised a seat in a donkey cart. Well, well! Did you hear did the big Belfast doctor come to Lord Mount-morris this day?"

"He did that. And sure what good can he do at all, at all? The old lord's nigh on eighty years of age, and all the doctors in Belfast couldn't cure death."

"No, indeed; but the quality can spend the money on their notions and nonsense. If the Bel-

fast doctor's cleverer than old Dr. Boyd, 'tis a wonder. Now you go in first, Nancy."

Nancy obeyed, muttering something about having more belief in her own medical skill than in Dr. Boyd's, or any other doctor's. One of the decried body was at that instant telling Lord Mountmorris' nephew that his uncle's chance of living was, despite his eighty years, exceedingly good.

"And you won't stay overnight, Steve?" young Philip Mountmorris said. The two were old friends.

"Can't, Phil," Dr. Mahon replied concisely.

"Then I'll drive you to the station myself," Philip said, and as they sped along the high road, he remarked suddenly, "I wonder you have never married, Steve."

Stephen Mahon laughed. "So do I, sometimes. The fact is, I intended to put my fate to the test to-night at a certain dinner party to which I was invited."

"How you must have cursed my message!"

"No; curiously enough, it gave me a sense of relief."

"Like your dentist being away when you call on him professionally?" Phil laughed.

"Exactly."

"Then you're not in love?"

"Love! Oh, one does not think of love at thirty-five."

"Did you ever think of it, old fellow?"

Dr. Mahon hesitated.

"Well, yes. I was once very fond of a certain Anna Blake, but I was only a recently qualified medical practitioner with no money and poor prospects, and the lady wisely said no when I asked her to marry me."

"Anna Blake!" Phil Mountmorris repeated. "The name seems familiar. But of course Blake is a common name."

"I went citywards and worked hard."

"And forgot Anna?"

"I suppose so."

"What became of the lady?"

"I don't know really. Her parents died and she left Rossrea. Phil, Phil, for God's sake, pull up! Ah! we're smashed up, anyway!"

Philip Mountmorris had not observed a little figure that came flying round a sudden curve of the road till the doctor's cry warned him. He had pulled up his horse so suddenly and violently that the frightened animal sprang to one side, upsetting the vehicle and its occupants. Both men were

on their feet in an instant, and unhurt. Phil attended to his horse while the doctor sprang to where the child lay.

"Are you hurt, little one?"

"Not very much," a shrill childish treble replied bravely. "Only my foot. The shaft hit me a little bit."

"We have a broken shaft," Phil announced. "I must get another vehicle. What about the little thing? Why, it is Rosie Carew! What are you doing out at this time of night, Rosie?"

"Going to the shop for something for Auntie Mary's stocking and for Anna's. I slipped away," Rosie said through sobs. "Betty went with Mrs. Gilligan to Mrs. Reid's wake."

"Where does she live?" Dr. Mahon asked.

"A bit further on. Not far. Rosie will direct you," Phil said.

"I'll carry her home and see what's amiss, if you go back for some conveyance," the doctor said, lifting her gently.

Mountrath was at no great distance. Betty was still at the wake, and Rosie directed the doctor to the room where a light burned brightly. An examination satisfied the doctor that her injuries were trivial.

"I'm afraid you are a very naughty little girl," he said when Rosie had told him where her aunt was.

"Betty says that, and I suppose it is true. Would you mind, please, taking the things out of the old Bible there and putting them back in Anna's little bag? I took it to carry my money to the shop. It isn't so far, you know. Look, isn't it a pretty bag?"

Rosie extracted her hoard of pence and halfpence out of the bag as she spoke. "In the Bible, please. I stuck them in it. Anna would be angry, and Auntie Mary very, very angry. Put them in quick."

The doctor lifted the heavy old Douay Bible and took from it a little silver brooch, a locket, and a letter. He started as he did so.

"That brooch was Anna's! And the letter! It is surely in my mother's handwriting!" he exclaimed.

"What do you say?" Rosie inquired, but Dr. Mahon was half mechanically reading the letter addressed by his mother to Anna Blake years before.

"DEAR MISS BLAKE," the epistle ran, "I am aware that Stephen imagines he wishes to marry

you. Poor boy! he is very susceptible, and has imagined himself in love often. I credit you with being a sensible girl, therefore I am writing to you to say that if you engage yourself to Stephen you will ruin his prospects. To marry early and on a trifling income would mean ruin and misery for you both. Stephen is clever, and may rise rapidly in his profession if unencumbered. I know my son, and I know it will be better for him—and you, also—that there should be no engagement between you. You see I am perfectly candid with you; and I trust to your own good sense to put an end to any nonsense on my boy's part."

Dr. Mahon dropped the letter with a groan.

"You are dead, mother!" he cried. "May God forgive you! And I thought Anna did not care!"

"Are you speaking to me?" Rosie demanded. "Or is it to yourself you are talking? I tell myself stories sometimes. And oh, do put the things in Anna's bag! She may come back soon."

Dr. Mahon obeyed.

"Where is Anna, and what is her other name?" he inquired.

"Anna Blake. She's away with Auntie Mary dressing the chapel. She was sick, you know, and

the doctor told her to come from the town to the country, and to run about and drink milk and cod-liver oil. The oil's nasty, isn't it?"

"Is she ill?" anxiously asked the man.

"Oh, she's better, ever so much. And after a bit she's going back to her work. She teaches little girls like me. And Auntie Mary will have to go away, too, because she can't pay money. They are both so sad sometimes. I thought I'd buy them something for their stockings at Christmas. You know there is no Santa Claus really. Auntie Mary fills my stocking. I saw her, but I pretended I didn't. I was going to buy lovely candy and toffee."

"You're a wise young woman."

Rosie accepted the compliment complacently. "Yes. I know all about nearly everything that Anna and Auntie talk of. Betty says if Auntie could find old Andy's gold, she could pay everything. He hid it, you know, when the 'Yeos,' whoever that was, was robbing Catholics. Betty says that. 'Tis a wonder Betty isn't back from the wake."

* * * * *

Betty, sulky and dignified as is the manner of wrong-doers, was seated in the chimney corner

when Philip Mountmorris, accompanied this time by a groom, reached Mountrath. The young man came to the door.

"Well, Stephen, here I am," he cried. "How is Rosie? Not much the worse, eh?"

Rosie herself seized Philip by the arm.

"Come here to the room," she said excitedly. "*He* has found Anna. He's going to marry her, I think. And now he is finding out about the gold—Andy's gold. Oh, come on."

Philip allowed himself to be led onward to the room where Dr. Mahon was bending over the old Douay Bible. Matters were explained to him.

"So perhaps you'll put me up for to-night, Phil," Dr. Mahon said. "I must get Anna to settle the wedding-day before I go back to town."

Anna Blake blushed prettily as she accepted Mr. Mountmorris' congratulations.

"Haven't you a fair knowledge of Gaelic, Phil? Mine is somewhat rusty, but I was examining this old Bible, and here on the fly-leaf is something concerning the whereabouts of some treasure. Come and help me, Phil, to translate."

The writing on the thick yellow paper was somewhat crabbed, and the two young men, both fair Celtic scholars, puzzled over it long. The groom

was sent back with the horse and trap, and Mary Carew set about preparing supper. She was stopped in her work by Dr. Mahon and Philip Mountmorris rushing to the fire excitedly.

"The crook ! the crook !" the latter cried. "Andy Carew took his gold to a goldsmith in Belfast and had it fashioned into a crook and a pendulum for the old clock in the corner. At least that is written on the fly-leaf of the Bible."

The crook, freed from its accumulation of soot, and the pendulum of the old clock were carefully examined.

"'Tis gold, gold sure enough," Phil Mountmorris exclaimed. "Mary, you won't leave Mountrath after all ! You'll be our tenant still !"

Mary did not. The heavy crook and pendulum realized enough money to clear off the debt due to the loan-fund and a fair surplus beside. The latter was used to help Peter Dogherty to portion off his five sisters. Then Peter sold his own farm and settled at Mountrath, and every year Dr. Mahon and his wife find time to pay a short visit to the farmhouse, where Rosie Carew is fast developing into a smart young woman.

His Sense of Honor

A Tale of Commercial Warfare

BY GEORGE M. A. CAIN

“WELL, I guess we’ve got them now!”

Frank Murray looked up from his plate to his father’s face, which grinned sarcastically over the top of a morning paper.

“What have we got, father?” he asked.

“What do you suppose we would get? The Arkand people, of course. The law is certainly an ass, but it is kicking the other fellow this time.”

Frank sat up and forgot his breakfast. He was his father’s partner in the enormous effort to break the power of the Arkand Sugar Refining combine.

“What’s doing?” he inquired with alacrity.

“Why, the people of Illinois, represented by our brilliant attorney general, have sprung a case of accepting rebates from the B. & X. I thought last night that it was all a hoax—too good to be true. You know the rate we pay the railroad for freight, don’t you?”

"Surely; six and a half cents per hundred pounds."

"Well—tell it not in Gath—we're busting the law all to pieces. The Honorable John Waller has discovered that the real legal rate is seventeen cents. At least, that is the way he construes the law, and his construction is likely to go with Judge Forrester. The Judge is looking for the governorship."

"But," asked the son in some trepidation, "aren't we all going to get into trouble at that?"

"Not a bit of it. We're not a trust. The people don't want us fined several millions." He glanced about the room to make sure the servants were absent. "Besides, Waller isn't going to forget whose money put him where he is. If it came out that all of us get the same rate, the case would fall flat as a poached egg."

The elder Murray turned his keen gray eyes to the page of stock quotations. "I thought so. Arkand is going down like a burst balloon." He continued to grunt with satisfaction as he noted the fall in other stocks related to those of their rival.

"Say, Frank," he said, when he laid down the

paper, "I guess I won't go down to the office to-day. I think I can do more at the Exchange. There is not much for you to do, anyhow. Just keep an eye on things."

He was quite right in saying that there was little of importance to worry his son at the office—in the way of work. Frank had abundant time to read all the papers, and to watch the ticker behind the ground-glass partition. And he had plenty of time for much thinking. His thinking brought him little pleasure. He had often suspected that the company he and his father controlled was not quite as uniformly fair in its dealings as he would have wished. As a child he had wondered why his father was so careless about his religion. He had begun to guess the cause before—now he was sure of it. The worst of it was that his knowledge, together with the position he held as half owner of the Independent interests, rendered him a sharer in the company's duplicity.

There was a way out—to be square with Arkand, to go on the witness-stand, and state that the B. & X. charged the trust no more than it charged others. It meant the loss of millions to the independent concern, and the utter enraging of his father. He had not got beyond regretting his own

knowledge of the affair when he reached home in the evening.

His father came in almost boisterously cheerful.

"Frank, Independent Sugar is up ten points. Don't you want to sell? It will rise higher to-morrow."

"I wish I could put all my stock on the market," was the young man's unexpected reply. As the father stared at him in amazement, he went on, "Yes, I mean what I say. I would be glad to; and I would do it if I did not know it would involve you in ruin."

"What is the matter? What have you heard?" the senior Murray managed to stammer at length.

"Nothing has happened to Independent," said Frank. His voice wavered when he tried to make it firm as he continued, "I hate to think the firm is in its present position, though."

"What is the matter with you?" the father asked, while he eyed his son quizzically, as though expecting signs of departed reason. "Why, we were never in such a fine position in our lives. Another day of this will enable us to float enough stock to double our capital and put us above Arkand forever. I'd like to know what is wrong with our position."

"Father, our position is not an honorable one. I would like to beat Arkand out of existence, if it can be done in open field. I have always believed it could be done, but I don't like this way of going about it."

"You young blockhead!" fairly roared the parent, as he caught the drift of his son's thought. "I've a mind to thrash you for your impudence. Want me to come to you for a course of morals, don't you? Why don't you go on the stand and tell the jury over there what our rate is?" His amazed wrath heightened as he realized that he had hit upon the very thing his son intended to do.

"You've got a fine sense of honor in business, haven't you? I suppose you have been loading up with Arkand stock this afternoon. Now you can tell your little story and then sell again with a nice snug profit. The interests you are supposed to protect—your own father's interests, can shift for themselves."

This accusation of duplicity was more than Frank had contemplated. It roused his anger to a pitch where he was afraid to trust himself for more speech, and he strode out of the room. But the old man shouted after him, "Go ahead and do it! I'll ruin you for it!"

Save that they were in the same concern the father and son were absolutely apart in their dealings. Old Tom Murray believed he was doing a good thing in parting with nearly half his fortune, and putting it into his son's hands when the boy graduated from the Jesuit college. The rest would be given when the father was ready to retire and the son had gained experience to make him capable of adding more to the family millions. The fact that their interests were held thus independently made it perfectly possible for the father to carry out the threat of ruining his son without in the least impairing his own fortune. That his head and his heart were hard enough to do so, none who knew the senior Murray doubted for an instant.

Frank's anger cooled by the time he had walked a few blocks. Then he began to reflect upon the situation. There was an hour before he would have to fill an engagement with Margaret Moulton, his fiancée of three days. Suddenly he realized that financial ruin meant more than merely having to go to work as a poor clerk. Margaret, he was sure, loved him well enough to share any poverty with him, but he was also sure that he loved her too well to ask her to do so. Old Mr. Moulton was constantly engaged in deals of millions, and he

lived as a prince of wealth. But the "Street" always felt a little doubtful about his real standing. Most of his dealings were in margins, though these mounted up into many thousands of shares. If Margaret married him now, there was every chance of her having to live in a state which, to one reared as she had been, would be nothing short of hardship. Moulton's millions would probably vanish into thin air when he died.

It is not to his discredit that the young man spent the most of the hour in trying to find a loophole in the wall conscience had built about him. The interests outside his own which were at stake made that a duty. The thing that really counts in the story is the fact that he ended it all by telephoning the chief of Arkand's lawyers that he would take the stand to-morrow to testify that the B. & X. railroad gave the same rate to others as to the trust.

That did not end it all. Afterward he sought Margaret, and told her, as gently as he could, that circumstances had arisen which made it his duty to end their brief engagement. Though she wept, pleaded, entreated, he would not explain the real reason. It was hard to leave her angry with him. It would not be quite possible for him to leave her

at all if she should insist that poverty was no barrier to their love.

As he carried his heavy heart home, he was met at the door by a policeman bearing a summons to appear in court next morning at nine. He had directed that this be done, partly because he hoped to convince his father that he had been obliged to act as he intended, and partly because he was afraid of his own resolution. From his father's rooms, as he entered his own, came the crisp tones of a "good-by" over the telephone. Not caring for a further attempt at an interview, he went to bed.

It was a sleepless night for him. Long before morning he had nearly decided to leave the State before he could be caught. It would be an easy matter to get out of jurisdiction and stay there till the trial was over. Once he got up and switched on the lights to dress himself, his eyes fell upon a little prayer-book his mother had given him years before. He picked it up listlessly, and it opened of itself at the examination of conscience he used to go over when he made his first childish confessions. He glanced carelessly at the words—then put out the lights and climbed back into his comfortable bed. It was nearly dawn, but now he went

to sleep and did not awaken till late in the forenoon.

A servant called him to the door and told him, with startled gestures, that an officer of the law wanted him below. He glanced at the silver clock on his mantel and realized how long he had overslept the hour for his appearance in court. Dressing hurriedly he went out with the man in uniform. But no testimony was required from him. When the prosecuting attorney saw that he had really come—that the announcement of the defense was not merely a bluff—he hastily moved to drop the case against the trust.

As Frank was leaving the court-room, he was approached by an agent of the Arkand Co.

“Take this,” whispered the man, “with Arkand’s compliments.”

Young Murray opened the envelope and saw that it contained a certificate of transfer of ten thousand shares of the trust’s stock. He flung it angrily into the face of the giver. He fumed all the way to his office, and heartily wished he had let the rival company get its punishment.

At the office his father was bending over the ticker. Not a word of recognition did he speak as Frank approached. His face was livid with

triumphant rage as he handed his son a bit of the paper ribbon and stalked out. The abbreviations meant the latest quotations of Independent Sugar, and they were fifteen points lower than yesterday's figures. With the pressure of several other investments, two more points would spell ruin for the young man. His father was taking revenge promptly.

He rushed to the telephone. Only one thing could be done to save his creditors. He got connection with his broker, and ordered him to sell his Independent Sugar stock. The broker protested that this would drop the bottom out of the present falling price, but Frank Murray ordered, "Sell."

The first block of a thousand shares brought the two points which would mean the saving of a remnant. The next failed to do so. The third sale was still lower. Drops of sweat stood on the young man's forehead. He held the receiver for further announcements. Suddenly there was a click in the instrument. He was cut off. All his efforts and calls failed to bring any response. Then he heard his father's voice in the other booth.

He rushed out, seized his hat, and ran to the nearest pay-station with private booths. Twenty

minutes had elapsed, and he was bathed in perspiration when he had finally renewed connection with his broker and inquired what had happened in the meantime.

"Fifteen thousand sold at one, fifty," came the sing-song voice of the clerk.

"One, fifteen?" roared Frank, not catching the word; "has it dropped eighteen points already?"

There was no response for a moment. He listened, wondering whether the next report would be still lower.

"Ten thousand shares sold, one, fifty-two and a half," suddenly startled his ears. His heart stood still for some seconds as he grasped the figures. His father was trying to save him, after all, by "bulling" the price.

"Twenty thousand, one, fifty-four," came a few moments later. There followed a lull, during which Frank Murray did some rapid figuring on the back of a visiting card. Half his holdings were gone; but the prices had been such that he had gained some hundreds of thousands of dollars. Suddenly he realized that it might be time to stop selling. He could hold on with the price as it was, or even ten points lower. He ordered the

broker to stop, as the next sale showed a drop of a point and a half.

He hurried back to the office to ask his father's forgiveness for any unkind words he had spoken, to thank him for saving the day. His father had gone. Then the young man took up the ticker again. Independent was still selling; the price going lower and lower. Frightened, he called his broker again to know if they had misunderstood his last order. They reported that others were doing the selling. As he kept his eyes glued upon the thin ribbon, he thought that the whole activity of the market was centered around Independent Sugar and Arkand. The latter was rising as rapidly as his own stocks were falling. When Arkand reached a hundred and seventy-five and Independent had come down to par, Frank Murray had an inspiration.

"Get some other firm to buy back all my Independent shares," he called to his broker. "Keep my name out of it. Get me as much more of the stock as you can on what I have with you. Have them buy up to one, twenty-five if necessary."

At the end of the hardest three hours of his life, young Murray had in his possession nearly three-fifths of all the stock of Independent Sugar. He

realized that he controlled the company. Wondering what had enabled him to accomplish the feat, he went home.

As he reached the steps of the great family mansion, he was hailed from the automobile of old Mr. Moulton. The machine came to a quick standstill. The man of great transactions leaped to the curb beside Frank.

"Say, young man," he began, "what have you been doing to your stocks anyhow? And what have you done to make Margaret so miserable?"

The young man smiled.

"Well, Mr. Moulton, I can't explain just what has been going on with the stocks. As for Margaret, I thought it was my duty to set her free when I had reason to suppose I would be a beggar by to-night."

He was a shrewd old man—he had already reached his conclusions.

"I see, I see," he cried in a satisfied tone, "old Tom tried to break you for giving Arkand the square deal. Suppose he would have done it all the more merrily if he had known that you were saving me about five millions that I had put on Arkand myself. But I lost nearly fifty thousand trying to 'bull' Independent when you were throw-

ing your shares around. Still I don't mind if it has fixed you up. You saved me enough."

Frank's outburst of gratitude was cut short by the old gentleman's calmly jumping into his car. He waved a farewell, and leaned over the side of the machine to call back:

"Better come around and fix things up with Margaret this evening."

Whatever sense of elation the younger Murray felt was distinctly chilled by the sound of his father's footsteps descending the stairs at the farther end of the hall. There was nothing but scornful rage to be expected here, and from one whom the son loved as a lad should love his father. Frank waited for orders to leave the house. He did not have the courage to look up as his father approached.

"Hello, Frank!" was spoken so heartily that it nearly swept the young man from his feet. "Rough day in stocks, wasn't it?" the tone went on as the son raised his eyes to meet those of his father. "Guess you didn't get hurt much, from the records of the transfers. You're a smarter man than I took you for."

There was genuine admiration in the voice and the face of Murray, Senior. Frank realized that

he had been forgiven, and that the forgiveness had been extended because the father was proud of his son's business abilities. Tom Murray had probably lost three hundred thousand dollars in to-day's game, but his paternal pride more than made up for it.

"Come in here, Frank, I want to talk to you," the father continued as he led the way through the library door and closed it behind them. "Now, my son, I want you to forgive your dad for being an ugly old fool. Sometimes I thought it was necessary to play the markets with stacked cards. I guess your game is the better policy, after all. You've got control of Independent Sugar now, and can do as you please with it, whether I like it or not. It's all right. I am beginning to think I have lost my grip."

The son felt a wave of compassion for his father in this attitude. He knew what a hard thing it must be for the old man to yield any hold on the reins of business, to confess that he was not as sharp and quick as any man in the great game of speculation.

"Father," he asked solicitously, "did you come out so badly to-day?"

"I?" queried his shrewd-faced parent. "Oh,

don't worry about me. I got in on Arkand this morning before you woke up. I got out again afterward. Haven't figured it all out yet; but I guess I am about half a million ahead. Why, you gave me the best tip I ever had."

The Creamery Girl

BY KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON

THE Creamery Girl, as Michael Kilrush had learned to call her, going the road to Curraclough Creamery of a May morning was fresh as the dew and sweet as a May blossom. She was dressed always in cool, clean prints, blue as her eyes or pink as her cheeks. With a sunbonnet a-top of her neat, shining hair and little brogans on her feet, with blue worsted stockings knitted by her own clever hands, she was as pretty as a picture.

Even Michael Kilrush, the hard-headed, shrewd, practical "strong" farmer—a "strong" farmer being in Ireland a prosperous one—found the neat figure uncommonly pleasant when he passed it two or three times a week in the early morning, he being on his way to fair or market, while she was at the creamery to receive the milk as it came in and to pour it into wide shallow pans on the dairy shelves.

"That 'ud be the girl for *my* money," the old fellow said to himself one morning, his set mouth relaxing from its grimness. "If it was to be

the like of her now, and not that girl that went to America in the spring, that omadhaun of a son of mine was to be after lookin' to marry!"

It was on the morning when the Creamery Girl had taken a stone out of the mare's foot for old Michael. Michael always drove a rather antediluvian jaunting car, but the mare had a bit of blood in her, and although she was old could yet show a clean pair of heels to her younger rivals.

It was in the first golden hours of the day, with the dewdrops glistening on all the wet grass blades, and Michael, in a great hurry to Tullybrackey Fair, where he had a few bullocks to sell, was fuming while he tried to hammer the stone out with another picked up on the road.

"Is it a stone she's got in the hoof of her, the creature?" asked the softest voice, just by his head.

Michael stood upright, his face very red from his exertions, and stared at the Creamery Girl, who this morning was attired in a lilac print, prettier even than the blue and pink ones, though Michael had thought they could not be improved upon.

"She has," he said, "an' I on the way to the fair. Sorra a bit of me can stir the ould stone. What am I to do at all, at all?"

"Let me," said the girl.

"Is it you?" said Michael, with rough gallantry. "What would a little girl like you know about how to take a stone from a horse's hoof?"

Whisking her lilac skirt aside, revealing a stout linen pocket suspended from her waist under her skirt, she felt among its contents for what she wanted, and brought out a penknife, which seemed to have many uses besides the ordinary one. She opened something in it which revealed itself as a kind of hook. Stooping down, she lifted the mare's foot and looked into it. Old Michael stared in amazement. The mare did not usually permit liberties to be taken with her by strangers. Then with a deft twist of the little instrument the stone rattled on the road.

She put down the foot gently, and slipped the knife into her pocket again. Old Michael looked at her in wonder and delight. He had never seen her so close before. She was wonderfully bright and shining, her skin of a satin smoothness of texture and the waves of hair under her bonnet and about her ears like yellow silk.

"'Tis the clever little girl you are," he said, "and it's a very nate contrivance you have in that knife of yours."

“ ’Tis nothing,” she said. “ ’Twas bought for me in Limerick.”

“ ’Twas a rare box of tools you had in it!” said Michael. “An’ now, my girl, supposin’ you get up the other side of the car, an’ I’ll lave you at the creamery gates in no time. ’Tis wettin’ your feet you’ll be crossin’ the fields.”

“ ’Tis very kind of you, sir,” said the girl, without hesitation, pulling down the other side of the car and stepping up on it lightly.

“I’ll give you a lift any time at all I’ll be comin’ this way,” said Michael. “ ’Tis a bit of a walk across the fields an’ a heavy dew most mornings.”

“Thank you kindly, Mr. Kilrush,” said the girl.

“So you know my name, acushla?”

“Doesn’t every one know Mr. Kilrush?” said the girl, with an air of innocent audacity.

Michael did not object to the flattery. It was true that he was well known and well respected, a man who had a good balance at the bank besides shares in this and that company, and had plenty of gear as well as money. His long low white house with the stock-yard behind it was a comfortable sight. He had eight horses for his farm-work, plenty of cattle and sheep and pigs. All his fortune he had made with his own hands and head.

And to think that that foolish boy of his had wanted to bring him home a girl from a bankrupt family, and had threatened to go away out of it to America after her! He was getting over it, the father thought, though at first he had been sulky and rebellious. As though the man who made the money hadn't a right to a word in its ultimate disposal! Still, he was glad Con was getting over it. They had been everything to each other since the mother died. If the boy would only take a fancy to a nice, sensible girl, with a bit of money, if possible, but if not—well, Michael Kilrush had not done as well as he had done without being in some ways a bigger man than his fellows. And he had not liked Con to be estranged from him. Time had been when he had looked to Con to bring home a fortune with a wife. But now, since there had been the cloud between them, he had come down in his demands. If there was a girl desirable in other ways, only lacking the money, a sound, decent little girl, not like the wastrel, bankrupt Gillespies—he would not say no to the boy again.

After that day, when the Creamery Girl took the stone from the mare's foot, it became quite a usual thing for Michael Kilrush to give her a lift on the

way to the creamery, when it happened that their ways were the same. He soon began to look with some anticipation along the sunny road before him between high hedges white with May blossoms for the pretty figure in the cool-colored prints.

The third or fourth time they drove together he asked her name and where she lived.

"My name is Nora Gillespie," she returned.

Old Michael gasped.

"Nora Gillespie," he repeated. "There was a family of that name over at Glenacappa."

"Glenacappa's full of Gillespies," she said; "I've a lot of cousins over there."

"There was a family went to America."

"There was so."

"They were no great loss. Idle and careless I heard they were, and not a penny left by the time they got to America."

"'Tis true enough," said Nora impartially. "The mother of them died when they were young. They were but a lot of boys and girls together, and the father was a soft, easy man. He died on them, too, and the place was sold over their heads. They maybe warn't so bad all out."

"And tell me, my little girl, where do you come from?" said Michael Kilrush, turning willingly

from the consideration of the other feckless Gillespies to the shining girl the other side of the car. "Is it far you have to come to the creamery?"

"It might be a mile or two. Do you know Cromwell's Fort, Mr. Kilrush?"

"Ay, well."

"My brother and I have taken it for seven years. There's a bit of land with it, you know. We'll see what we can make of it. If we do well, we'll maybe stick on. He's a very wise boy, is William, though he's young, and he's cut for a farmer."

"My poor little girl!" said Michael Kilrush, looking at her compassionately. "You'll never make anything out of the land. It grows more thistles than any other bit of land in the country. And 'tis the queer old place for you to be livin'."

"We're stubbing up the thistles fine," said the girl. "And it is a queer old place, but we like it. If you're passing by one day—any day after next Tuesday fortnight—and look in, you'll find me at home."

"Not at the creamery?"

"I'll be done at the creamery then. It was a three months' course of lessons I took. I wanted to learn the dairy work. The nuns didn't teach us

butter-making at the school. I'll often think, Mr. Kilrush, how kind you were to me."

"Indeed, then, I'm not going to lose sight of you," said Michael, feeling a sudden dismay at the thought of the long road without the little figure upon it. "I'll come to Cromwell's Fort fast enough, though 'tis a good nine miles from my own gate."

He did find his way to Cromwell's Fort very soon after Nora Gillespie had done with the creamery. It was surprising how he missed the little figure the other side of the car, and how much longer the road seemed now that there was no Nora to give a lift to.

He had only known Cromwell's Fort as a thick, round tower seen in the distance across the fields, with a low, long cottage fixed at its base. It had seemed an unchancy sort of residence for any one, to his mind, let alone that such old places bore a bad name with the peasantry. He would have said that he despised the superstitions of the people, being a hard-headed, dogmatic old man, but he was not really far enough away from them to be uninfluenced by their beliefs. There were things he would not do—for instance, stub up the group of fairy thorns that grew in the middle of his best

meadow, making it awkward for the machine, let alone wasting good land. It was no use going against old superstitions and customs, although he didn't believe any harm could come of it—not he.

He paid a surprise visit to Cromwell's Fort on his way back from Tullybrackey. He was agreeably surprised. The Fort was set down in the midst of a field, but a garden was in process of being made. Under the windows of the dwelling-house ran two long beds filled with annuals in gorgeous flower.

He looked in over the half-door. There was the sound of churning and a smell of cream. The kitchen was quite bright and shining. There were scarlet geraniums in the deep window. The floor was ochred bright red. The big dishes and pewter jugs on the dresser winked in the sunlight. There was a round iron griddle with cakes baking on the fire, and an elderly woman was ironing some of Nora's print frocks. Nora herself was at the churn, an old-fashioned churn in which one worked the dash up and down. Her arms were bare to the elbow, and her hands wet with the milk. She was as sweet and fresh in her enveloping apron of brown holland as she had been when she tripped along the road to the creamery.

Her face lighted up with pleasure when she saw him. She nodded and smiled her welcome, while the elderly woman came forward and set him a chair.

"The butter's just coming," said Nora. "I daren't leave it."

He came and took the dash from her for luck, "lest the butter should fly away." She gave a few whispered orders to the elderly woman, who laid her iron aside and moved the griddle a little off the fire.

Michael Kilrush, having relinquished the dash, sat down in his chair by the sunny half-door, and filled his pipe. He was mentally approving. If she had left the churn now she wouldn't have been the girl for his money.

He sat and talked while the churn dash gradually eased off. He looked on while Nora took the butter off the churn, carrying it away into an inner room which he took to be the dairy. He was mentally contrasting it all with his own uncared-for establishment, left to the tender mercies of a slatternly hussy. The scents struck even his uncritical nostrils—the sweet sharp smell of the clove gillyflowers outside, mingled with the smell of the cream and the fresh buttermilk, the brown-

ing cakes on the griddle, the warm smell of ironing. At home the hens would be about the kitchen, and the pigs wandering unpleasantly near the door.

The elderly woman came in with a freshly-killed chicken, and proceeded to take the feathers off by a simple process of passing the bird over the red cinders. He escaped from the smell of the burning feathers into the little parlor beyond the kitchen, where Nora, having worked the butter, was now free to entertain him. She had pulled down her sleeves, and wore the peculiarly clean, shining look which was so characteristic of her. While she talked to him she spread a cloth on the table, and set out knives and forks and glasses with a civilization that Michael Kilrush had known little of at home.

While she talked he gazed about the room. It was very old-fashioned, but very pleasant. The spotted mirror above the mantel, the few engravings, the corner cupboard for china and glass, the big horsehair sofa, the carpet with its sprawling bunches of cabbage roses, were such as might be seen in many best parlors of Irish farmhouses. But there was something added here—perhaps it was the flowers within and without, perhaps it was

the window in its deep frame, perhaps the perfect cleanliness. Or—Nora herself.

Michael Kilrush sat to such a meal, daintily served, as he had not eaten for many a day—perhaps never before. It was not the chicken was perfect eating, as only a chicken cooked before it has had time to get cold is; it was not the stewed gooseberries and cream; nor the whiskey and water which Nora prepared for him with a miraculous understanding of his liking. No, it was just the colleen herself. As he sat smoking his pipe afterward he acknowledged to himself that she had put the “comether” entirely upon him. He wanted to see her sitting “foreninst” him as she was doing to-day all his days—as his daughter, Con’s wife.

It might be an unchancy old place, but Nora seemed to have banished all the ghosts out of it. She showed him how the door opened just inside the tower, and following her up the winding staircase, he looked into her room—a dainty girl’s room, such as he had never seen before. He had always wanted a daughter.

Later on he was introduced to Nora’s brother, a wise youth, although in years he was only a boy. He discussed the farming with old Michael Kilrush on more than equal terms. Old Michael

smiled grimly as the freckled, red-headed boy derided the old ways of farming, and wondered how it was at all they weren't all broke out of it. Ah, well, thought old Michael, he'd learn, he'd learn; and yet the boy had his head screwed on the right way. He showed some of the results of his farming, and Michael Kilrush saw that they were good.

He drove home thoughtfully, so thoughtfully that he passed by more than one old friend and neighbor, who wondered if the age was coming on Michael at last, or what at all was he up to.

He said very little to Con when he got home. They ate the comfortless evening meal, and though he had never thought of such things before, he could not help contrasting the dirty, slovenly table with the one at Cromwell's Fort.

Afterward, when Judy Kelly had put her shawl over her head and departed, they sat together by the light of a dirty lamp, which smelled of sheep oil. The last light was dying off the sky. It would soon be time for them to be going to bed.

Con brought out a paper from his pocket.

"Would you like me to read to you, father?"

"Not to-night, Con. Let us step outside for a breath of air. Turn out the lamp—what at all

good is it except to show you the misery of this ould kitchen?"

Con stared, as well he might, at this new fastidiousness of his father. He turned down the lamp obediently, and followed the old man out into the boreen.

At a gate leading into the fields they stopped, leaning their elbows on the top bar.

"Con, acushla," said Michael. His voice had a strange sound, of wheedling almost. Con could not see his face for the dusk. "Con, acushla, I was hard on you in regard to the girl you wanted to marry last year."

"You were," said Con, shortly.

"'Twas for your good, my son. She wasn't the wife for you. Sure I'd do anything I could if the girl was the right girl."

Con was silent.

"Sure I'd be only too willing for you to bring home a wife," the old man went on. "Aren't we lonesome and desolit, the two of us, with only that dirty Judy to do for us? Con, I've seen the very little girl to make you happy—and me, too. Her name is . . ."

"I won't have my match made," said Con, sulkily.

“Wait ’til you see her,” the old man went on patiently. “You might be puttin’ on your new suit o’ clothes an’ the blue tie, and we’ll drive over to-morrow.”

“I tell you I won’t have my match made,” said Con, fiercely.

“Who was talkin’ o’ match-makin’? I only want you to see the little girl. Her name is—’tis a quare chance, to be sure—the name of the girl you were so took up with—Nora Gillespie. They’re from the same part of the country. There do be a good many Gillespies over there. She only has her brother, Bill. He’s a comical little chap, Con: the consait of him! They’ve got Cromwell’s Fort beyond at Tullybrackey, an’ bedad ’tis the nate little place they’ve made of it. I’m thinkin’ if she were only here ’tis the greatest of comfort we’d have in it.”

He was talking by way of smoothing over Con’s irritation, hoping, too, to get him to see Nora. If the boy would only see her, ’t isn’t much he’d be thinkin’ of the unlucky namesake of hers. He had set his heart on the match—a wife like that would be better than money.

“Father,” said Con, in a low voice, “I didn’t mean to deceive you, but . . . Nora didn’t go to

America at all, at all. She and Bill thought they'd stand by the old country. They were the steady ones. I didn't know that you knew her. Sure she wouldn't let me come to see her, though I knew she was only eight miles away. 'Twas better than America, at all counts. She said you'd come round, and that she wasn't going to have a hole and corner courting. She's the proudest little girl——"

"An' the best, an' the purtiest, an' the sensiblest between the four seas of Ireland," said Michael Kilrush with what was almost a sob of joy. "Sure, I've been courtin' for ye, my boy, givin' her a lift to the creamery two or three times a week these six or seven weeks past. She was learnin' more than the dairy-work, God bless her: she was learnin' a cross, obstinate old man to love her."

Con Kilrush was no great scholar to be hurt by this use of a passive for an active verb. He was satisfied with what it conveyed.

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